

Discover the magnificent world of

# RASHTRAPATI BHAVAN















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Discover the magnificent world of

# RASHTRAPATI BHAVAN







SCULPTURE OF THE CAPITAL  
FROM A SHIVA PILAR  
MAHARAJA MUSEUM, CALCUTTA  
POLISH MUSEUM, WARSAW



Discover the magnificent world of

# RASHTRAPATI BHAVAN

by

Subhadra Sen Gupta

Illustrated by Tapas Guha

Published by

Publications Division, Government of India



DISCOVER THE MAGNIFICENT WORLD OF  
RASHTRAPATI BHAVAN

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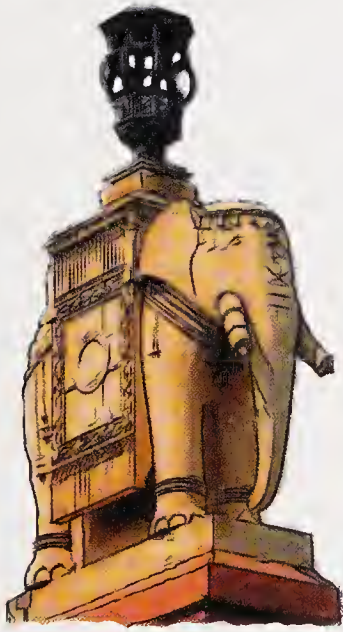
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# INTRODUCTION



## WELCOME TO THE RASHTRAPATI BHAVAN



As we go past on Vijay Chowk or along the wide avenue of Rajpath, someone is sure to point to it and say, 'Rashtrapati Bhavan! Our president lives there.' And we all feel a quick rush of pride. Once this same building was the home of the British viceroy who was the symbol of the British Raj. His presence on the Raisina Hill was a constant reminder that India was a colonised nation. An Indian citizen of an independent nation lives there today. He is the President of India, the largest democracy in the world.

Traditionally the president would ride out in a horse carriage for the Republic Day Parade, a tradition discontinued for thirty years. The current president, Pranab Mukherjee, revived it during the Beating Retreat ceremony at the Vijay Chowk in New Delhi, in 2014. The carriage







### *A view of the Rashtrapati Bhavan from the Mughal Garden*

is surrounded by the proud soldiers of the President's Bodyguard (PBG) in their scarlet and gold uniform, riding their majestic horses. To the clip clop of horses' hooves, they come slowly trotting down Rajpath, their turbans flaring high as their lances and swords glitter in the sun and the pennants snap in the breeze. It is quite a sight!

The Rashtrapati Bhavan has seen it all - the viceroys and their luxurious lives, the balls and banquets, the elaborate ceremonies, the times of our freedom struggle and many other moments of triumph and loss.

This is the fascinating story of the Rashtrapati Bhavan - how it was built, the events it has seen, the role it continues to play in the life of our nation and the people who live and work there. Through the pages of this book we will enter the world of the President of India. We will walk along the magnificent halls and terraces; stroll in the garden and watch the birds, as the splashing fountains create rainbows in their sprays.

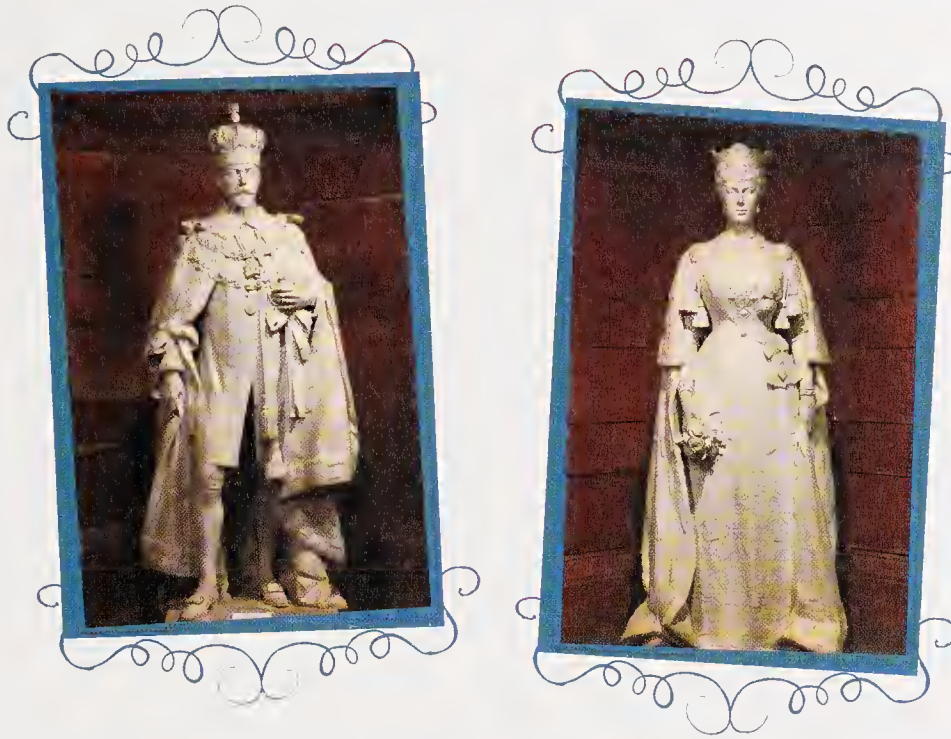
So let's listen to the story of the Rashtrapati Bhavan...





# A BRITISH DURBAR

---



*Marble statues of King George V and Queen Mary*

**T**he story of the Rashtrapati Bhavan began at a magnificent durbar over a hundred years ago. In those days the capital of British India was the city of Calcutta that the East India Company had built in the eighteenth century.

In December 1911, the British king George V and Queen Mary came on a royal visit to India and the Indian government led by the Viceroy Lord Hardinge decided to hold a grand durbar to welcome them in Delhi. Indians were told that it was to be called the Coronation Durbar as George V or 'Pancham George' as they called him, had just become king.







Now you may wonder, why hold the durbar in Delhi when the capital was Calcutta? There was a reason. The Indian National Congress Party had been formed in 1885 and eminent early nationalist thinkers who were influencing the opinion of the party and the nation like W.C. Bonnerjee and Surendranath Bannerjee belonged to the city. In 1905 when Lord Curzon divided Bengal into two provinces, Calcutta exploded with angry protests. The Bengalis felt that the division of the province was an attempt to divide them on religious grounds because of their united involvement in the freedom movement. So the government knew that the people of Bengal were not going to be very welcoming of the new king.

Also, the British were always trying to show Indians how they were even better than the Mughals. Delhi had been the capital city of many kingdoms for centuries and in the seventeenth century the Mughal emperor Shahjahan had built his capital city, Shahjahanabad, in Delhi (what we now call Old Delhi). For the British a grand durbar in the old Mughal capital appealed to their sense of an imperial spectacle. They were going to make Indians understand that they were now being ruled by Britain and not the Mughals. After all, George V was called the 'King Emperor of India' (though, oddly enough, he was not called the 'Emperor of Britain') who would now actually hold a magnificent durbar and meet his subjects.

So, on 12th December 1911 the durbar was held at the Coronation Ground in North Delhi. The king and queen clad in white satin and purple velvet, with shiny new crowns on their heads sat on solid silver thrones placed on a raised dais in the royal pavilion. This pavilion had a golden Mughal style dome and the royal couple sat under a crimson and gold canopy. After a 101 gun-salute, march of soldiers, roll of drums and blowing of trumpets all the Indian maharajas and nawabs, glittering in silks and jewels walked up to bow to their sovereign.







King George V and Queen Mary sat on these silver thrones at the Coronation Durbar







A painting of C. Rajagopalachari, taking oath in the Durbar Hall  
as Independent India's first Indian governor general





The idea behind the durbar was that it should impress the king's Indian subjects, especially the princes, by its grandeur and make them more loyal to the emperor. Also, the government hoped that it would convince the people that Indian freedom fighters could never win against the mighty British Raj.

King George V also made a couple of very important proclamations at the durbar. It was announced that the partition of Bengal was being cancelled. Further, the capital of British India was to be transferred from Calcutta to Delhi. The plan was to build a new capital city and so the king laid the foundation stone of a new capital in North Delhi. The new city would rise on the dusty landscape south of the old city and its crowning glory was going to be the giant palace where the viceroy would live.

So the vast Viceroy House with four floors and 340 rooms rose on a hill to dominate the landscape of the new city of New Delhi which was envisaged as an 'empire in stone'. It was going to symbolise the British Empire with its magnificent British structures – a gateway, mansions, offices and arcades. The imperial capital was to be built in stone as the British believed that their Indian Empire was going to last a thousand years (The British occupied New Delhi and the Viceroy House for exactly seventeen years!).

After India's independence in 1947, when India became a democracy, the Viceroy House was renamed as the Rashtrapati Bhavan. Chakravarty Rajagopalachari as governor general was the first Indian occupant of the Rashtrapati Bhavan. The first President of India to live in it was President Rajendra Prasad.





# DESIGNING A NEW CITY



*Edwin Landseer Lutyens*

**I**t was not going to be easy to design and build a new city and the job fell on Viceroy Lord Hardinge to find the people to do it. The most coveted assignment was for the architect who would design the huge palace for the viceroy and there was a fierce competition among British architects for the job. It was won by Edwin Landseer Lutyens who became the chief architect, helped by Chief Engineer Hugh Keeling in the mammoth construction task. The actual work of building was of course done by thousands of Indian craftsmen and labourers who have been forgotten by time.

The original plan was for the capital to be built in North Delhi, where the foundation stone was laid. However it was dropped as it was felt that the location was too cramped and there would not be enough space for the city to grow. Also the land was expensive to buy. So a team wandered around Delhi, often on elephant back, in the hot summer, looking for a better location. They finally chose the two villages of Malcha and Raisina. The foundation stone was shifted there and then work began on the Viceroy's House. Initially everyone optimistically believed the palace would take four years to build when in fact it took more than eighteen!



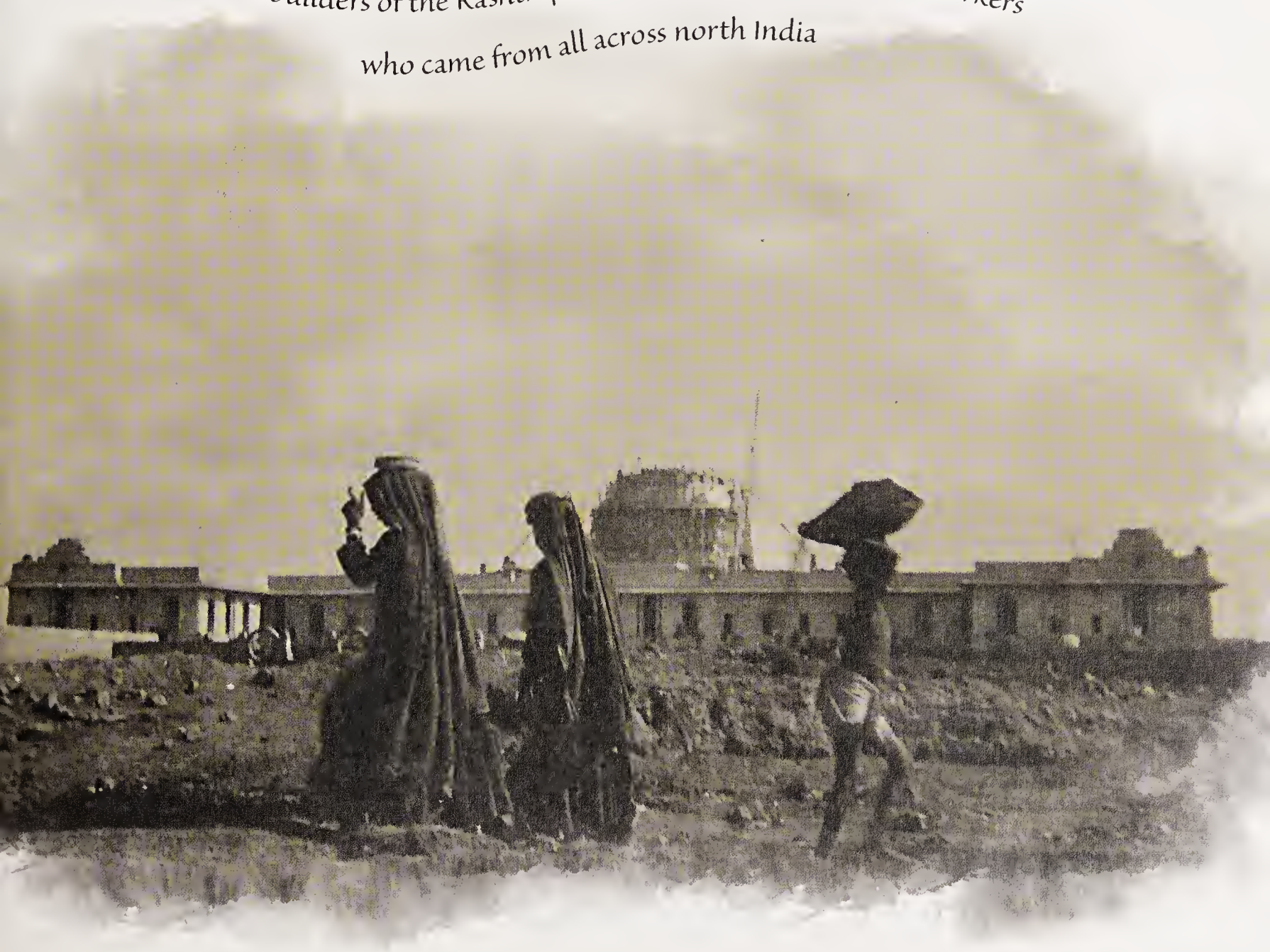




Lutyens brought in an old friend, architect Herbert Baker, who designed the two secretariat buildings that are now called North and South Block that also stand on Raisina Hill. Lutyens, who had never been to India, was not very impressed by Indian architecture calling it 'Mogulese and Hindoo contraptions', and planned to use a European style but Lord Hardinge was keen to have 'western architecture with an oriental motif' and so many Indian elements were also included in the design.

Finally Lutyens used many Indian designs in his building. For example if you look carefully at the Rashtrapati Bhavan you will notice that the

*The real builders of the Rashtrapati Bhavan were these Indian workers who came from all across north India*







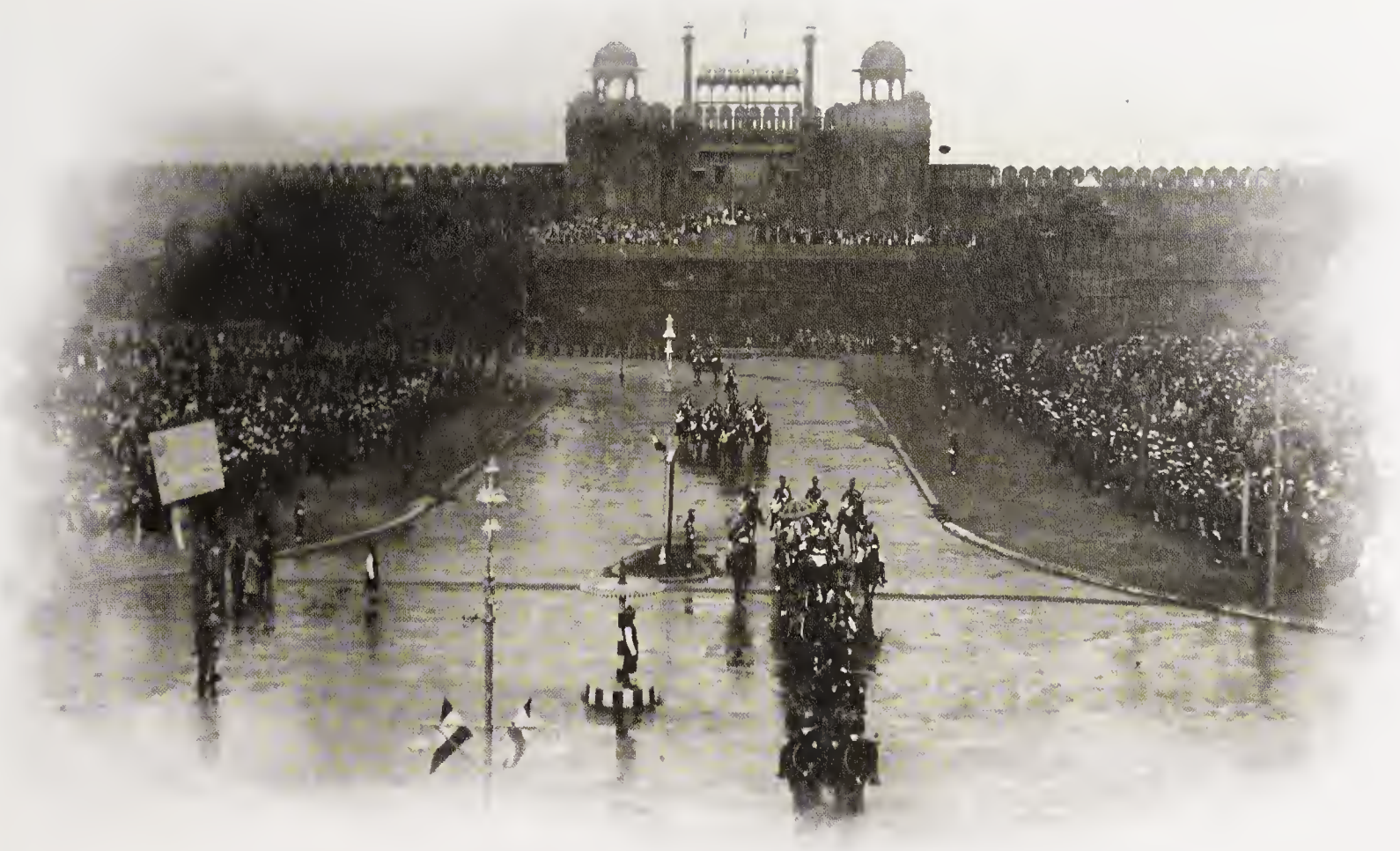
dome with its decorative railing is like the Buddhist stupa at Sanchi built in the third century BCE by the Mauryan king Ashoka. There are carved elephants and horses everywhere along with the royal British lions. Then the overhanging stone cornices called *chhajjas* were placed above the windows to provide shade against the fierce Indian sun and protection from the lashing monsoon rains.

If you look up you can see that on the roof top there are these decorative circular pavilions called *chhatris*, like the ones found in Rajasthani forts and palaces. Carved screens called *jaalis*, that can also be seen in Shahjahan's Red Fort, Taj Mahal and many other Mughal buildings, with their delicate perforated designs, add elegance to doorways. Lutyens also stuck bells on top of the Greek style pillars giving them a touch of Hindu and Jain temples. Finally at the back he laid out a beautiful garden that was landscaped in the Mughal style.

*This intricate jaali doorway shows the magical skills of the Indian stone carver*







## A New City Rises

---

What was Delhi like in 1911 when Lutyens and his team went wandering around looking for a place to build a new city? The boundaries of the city of Delhi or rather Shahjahanabad, ended at the Delhi wall that enclosed localities like Daryaganj and Ajmere Gate. Beyond that were villages and agricultural fields dotted with the ruins of earlier cities like Purana Qila, Ferozshah Kotla, Tughlaqabad and Qutub Minar way out in the south. There were a few small patches of habitation like the houses around the Nizamuddin dargah or the many sarais or inns along the road where people stopped for food and shelter.

*The first Republic Day parade in 1950 before the Red Fort*



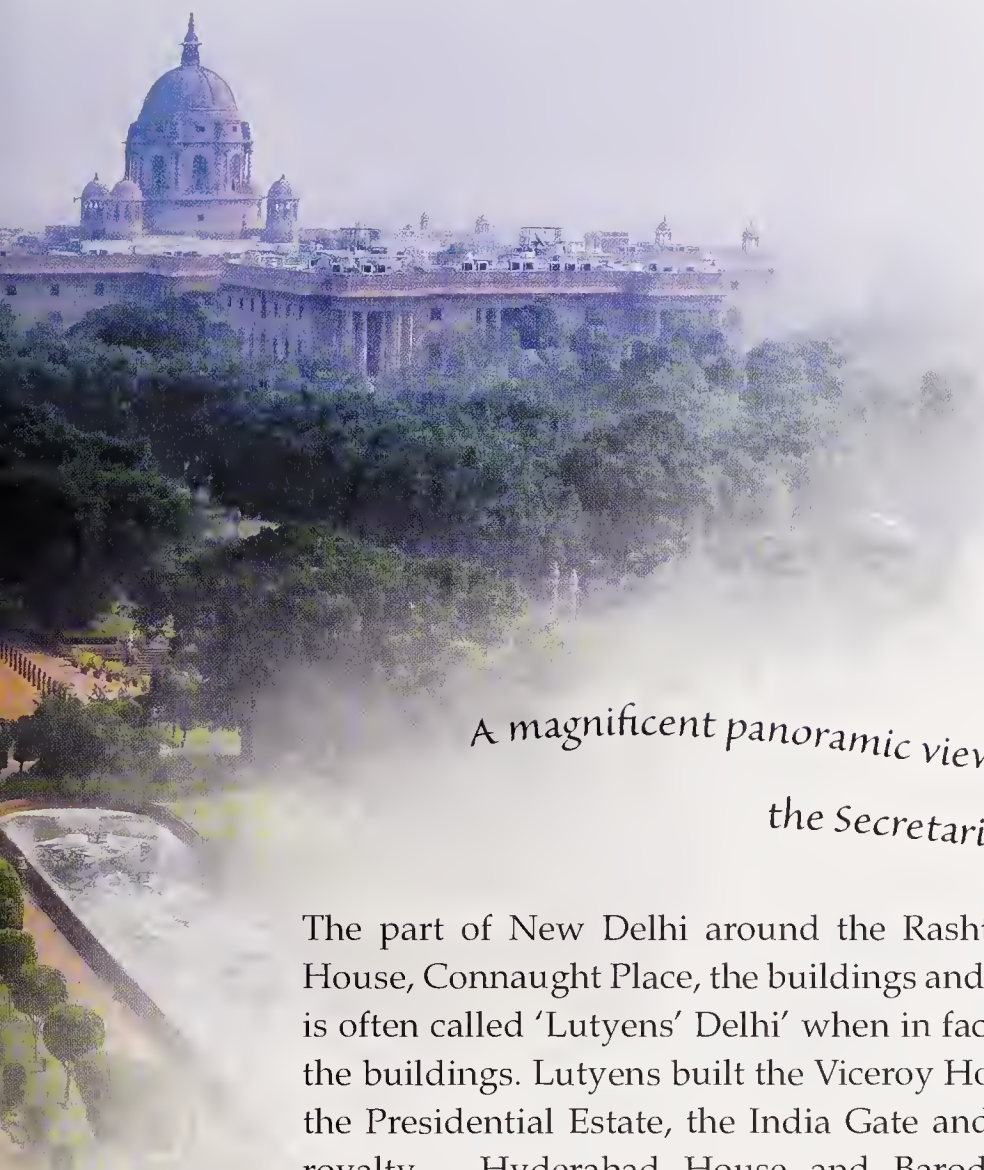




Even in the 1940s when New Delhi had been built, people going on a day trip from Chandni Chowk to the Qutub Minar would travel by tongas, packing picnic baskets with food and carrying earthen *surahis* of drinking water. The journey would take hours and everyone wanted to return home before dark because the roads were not safe. Today we zip off from South Delhi to watch a cricket match at the Ferozshah Kotla grounds that stand at the edge of Daryaganj and are home in an hour or so. In 1912 they were building a new city in a huge empty space and connecting it to Chandni Chowk by roads!







*A magnificent panoramic view of Rajpath flanked by  
the Secretariat buildings*

The part of New Delhi around the Rashtrapati Bhavan, Parliament House, Connaught Place, the buildings and bungalows around Rajpath is often called 'Lutyens' Delhi' when in fact he did not design most of the buildings. Lutyens built the Viceroy House and four bungalows in the Presidential Estate, the India Gate and two residences for Indian royalty - Hyderabad House and Baroda House. The Parliament House and the secretariats were designed by Herbert Baker. The bungalows were designed by the team of William Henry Nicholls, C.G. and F.B. Blomfield, W. S. George and A. G. Shoosmith. Robert Tor Russell designed Connaught Place, Teen Murti Bhavan and the National Stadium.

When work began, craftsmen from Agra, Mirzapur and Bharatpur were brought to Delhi and many of these stone carvers called 'sangtarash', like those from Agra, were descendents of craftsmen who had worked on Mughal buildings. No money was spared to get the most expensive stones. The reddish gold sandstone was brought from quarries in Agra, Bharatpur and Dholpur. Marble in many colours were used. The white marble came from Makrana in Rajasthan, the green ones from Baroda







and Ajmer, the black from Gaya, the grey from Marwar, pink from Alwar, yellow from Jaisalmer and only the red marble was imported from Italy.

It was a giant and complex project. Lutyens did not just design the mansion, there were also staff quarters and gardens, a nine-hole golf course and eight tennis courts, a swimming pool, squash court, cricket ground, bakery, kitchens, stores and even a cinema. In the basement was the viceroy's press that printed invitations, menus, seating plans and programmes for tours. It was a huge establishment that during the time of the last viceroy Lord Mountbatten employed 2,000 people whose families in all made up the 6,000 people who lived in the estate.

*The marble mosaic floor in the library*







## A VANISHING BUILDING

---

George V decided that the building was to be called Viceroy House and the new city was to be called New Delhi. In the beginning the plan was to have the two secretariat buildings at the bottom of the hill with the Viceroy House looming above them. At Baker's suggestion the secretariat buildings were also placed on the hill along a slope and this meant that the Viceroy House was shifted back. Lutyens did not initially realise the problem that this move would create because moving the Viceroy House back made the building vanish as you went down Rajpath!

You can see this vanishing magic happen even today if you drive down Rajpath from India Gate. In the beginning you can easily see the pillared front, the Jaipur Column and the iron gateways of the Rashtrapati Bhavan flanked by North and South Block. However, as you get closer to the slope suddenly the Rashtrapati Bhavan vanishes and only the dome is visible, floating in the air! This is because the slope of the road is so steep that it hides the building. The only solution was to lower the angle of the sloping road and Lutyens fought for years to get it done but it was too expensive and the government refused. Things got so heated that Lutyens stopped speaking to Baker and they worked in silence for six years.

*The wrought iron gates open into the driveway*





# A VERY SPECIAL GUEST

---

Lord Irwin moved into the new residence in 1929 and the Viceroy House was inaugurated formally in February 1931 with parades, balls and receptions hosted by Lord Irwin. At these glittering gatherings, where only the Indian princes were invited, what no one talked about was that out in India the Congress Party was leading the Civil Disobedience movement. In March 1930 Mahatma Gandhi had started the Salt Satyagraha by leading the march to Dandi. At this time most of the Congress leaders were in prison. Then two days after the inauguration ceremonies Gandhiji arrived at the gate of the spanking new Viceroy House, invited by the Viceroy Lord Irwin for talks. He was coming straight from Yervada Jail.

Indians did not miss the significance of the scene of this man in a dhoti and chadar walking up the stairs of Lutyens' palace. For the first time, an Indian was going to meet the viceroy as an equal. Gandhiji was there as a representative of the people of India to negotiate with Irwin as the head of the Government of India. This event was more significant than the glamorous celebrations held earlier because it heralded the events of the future.



*The viceroy Lord Irwin in colourful regalia*







*Mahatma Gandhi often met Lord and Lady Mountbatten at the Rashtrapati Bhavan*







## THE RASHTRAPATI BHAVAN TODAY

---

In 1948, Governor General Chakravarty Rajagopalachari became the first Indian to live in the Rashtrapati Bhavan. As a simple freedom fighter he preferred to occupy a few rooms in the family wing. So the luxurious viceroy's apartments that had been used by the Mountbattens were turned into a guest wing for heads of state of other countries who were visiting India.

On 26th January 1950, freedom fighter and Congress leader Dr Rajendra Prasad became the first president of the Republic of India and the Viceroy House was renamed as the Rashtrapati Bhavan. It was his responsibility to preserve and protect the Constitution of India. Thus on 26th January 1950, it was President Rajendra Prasad who rode out in the presidential buggy for our first Republic Day Parade.



*Guests arriving to attend a ceremony in the Durbar Hall*





*Dr Rajendra Prasad, the first President of India*

From 1948 to 2016, 13 presidents have lived in the Rashtrapati Bhavan. Today important State guests stay at the Rashtrapati Bhavan and many important ceremonies and State banquets are held here.

In this book you will read about the many aspects of the Rashtrapati Bhavan. How it was built, its architecture, the story of the President's Bodyguard (PBG), the history of the Mughal Garden and about the life of the people who have lived there. There are also sections called Fascinating Facts and a few small fictional stories to make it all the more interesting. We hope it will help you understand our history better. There is also a chapter about the role of the president in our democracy. So happy reading!





# FASCINATING Facts

1 Many capital cities have been built in Delhi beginning with the Indraprastha of the Mahabharata. By some counts New Delhi is the eighth city, some say it is the fifteenth. Before the National Stadium was built at the end of Rajpath, the sixteenth century Purana Qila (also called Indrapat) was visible from the Rashtrapati Bhavan on top of Raisina Hill.

2 There were two durbars held in Delhi before 1911. In 1877 Lord Lytton held the first durbar to mark the proclamation of Queen Victoria as the Empress of India. In 1903 Lord Curzon held a durbar to celebrate the accession of Edward VII to the throne.

3 The Coronation Durbar of 1911 attended by King George V and Queen Mary was the first time that the king and queen of Britain were present and not just the viceroy. The royal couple arrived in Bombay by ship and the place where the Gateway of India stands today is where they landed and were greeted with a parade.

4 The durbar was held in a tented city which could accommodate 25,000 people. It had its own telephone service, paved roads, water supply, electricity and a railway station with ten platforms.

5 New crowns were designed for George V and Queen Mary. The king's Imperial Crown of India cost 60,000 pounds and was set with diamonds, sapphires, emeralds, rubies and was the heaviest crown ever made. After the durbar these crowns were taken back to Britain and are now displayed in the Tower of London. They have never been worn again.



6

The Rashtrapati Bhavan is larger than the Buckingham Palace and the Palace of Versailles in France. The building has four floors and 340 rooms. It is 630 feet wide, 2,00,000 square feet and nearly two-thirds of a mile around the foundations. It was built using 700 million bricks that were made in 22 brick kilns. Initially it was estimated that it would take four years and cost four million pounds to build the Rashtrapati Bhavan. It ended up costing ten million pounds and took twenty years to be built.

7

During British times the road leading up to the Viceroy House was called King's Way and a road leading off it to Connaught Place was called Queen's Way. We call them Rajpath and Janpath today.

8

How do you pronounce Lutyens? Well it's not 'looteyns'! The correct pronunciation is 'lutchenz'. He wanted to build the mansion all in marble to rival the Taj Mahal but Lord Hardinge vetoed the idea.

9

The capital was shifted to Delhi after the 1911 Durbar and a temporary capital was built in North Delhi while New Delhi was being built. There was an imperial secretariat and council chamber designed by E. Montague Thomas. The work was begun in 1912 and completed in a year. Today the Old Secretariat is the headquarters of the Government of Delhi.

10

The viceroy lived in a circuit house renamed the Viceregal Lodge while New Delhi was being built. Today it is the office of the Delhi University.

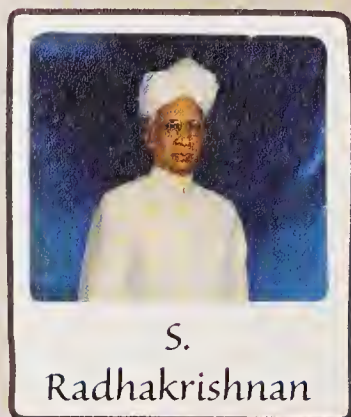
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Five viceroys lived in the Viceroy House. They were:  
Lord Irwin, Lord Willingdon, Lord Linlithgow, Lord Wavell and Lord Mountbatten.

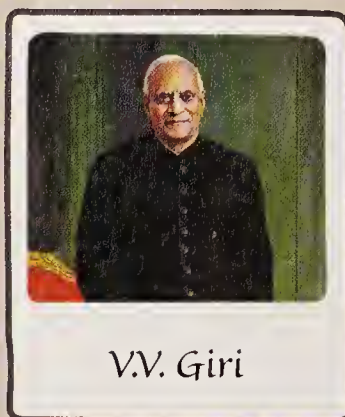


# THE PRESIDENTS OF INDIA

The Presidents of India who have occupied the Rashtrapati Bhavan so far are:



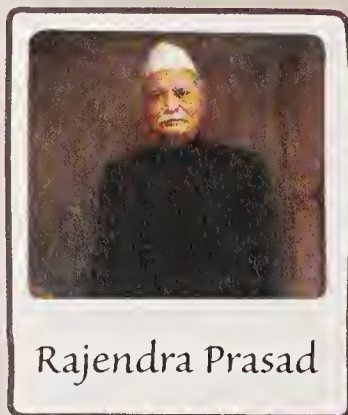
1962-67



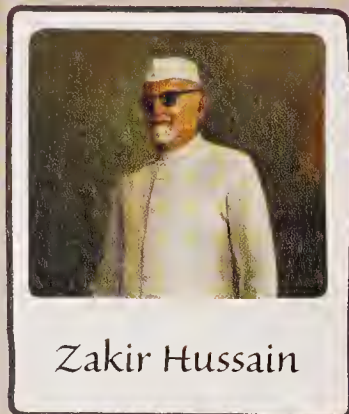
1969-74



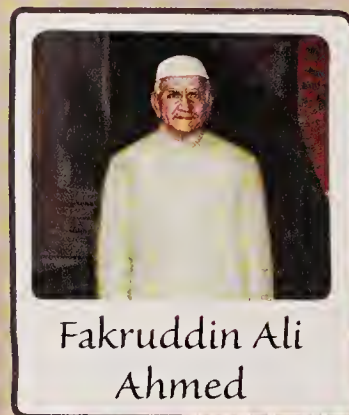
1977-82



1950-62



1967-69

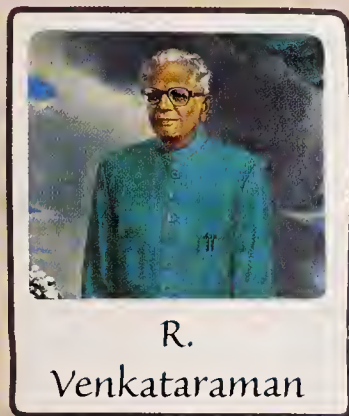


1974-77



1982-87





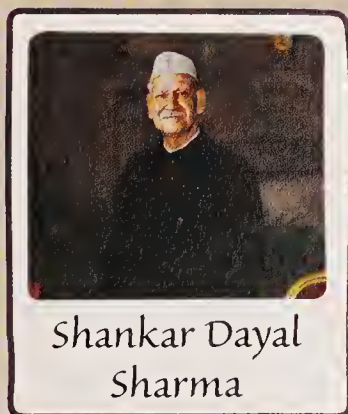
1987-92



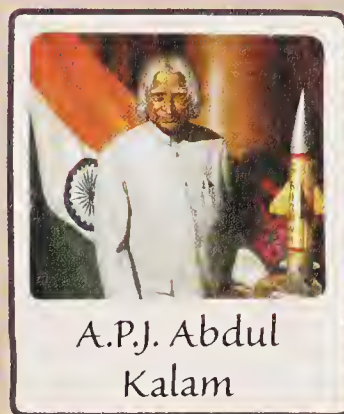
1997-2002



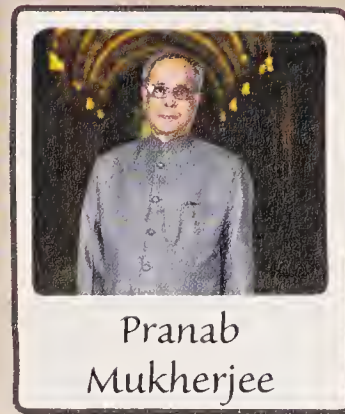
2007-12



1992-97



2002-07



2012-



# TIMELINE

Between 1911 and 1931 while the Viceroy House was being built what was happening in India and the world?

1911

Coronation Durbar  
in Delhi

1914

First World War

1915

Annie Besant forms  
the Home Rule League

1913

Mahatma Gandhi starts  
Satyagraha in South Africa

1917

Champaran Satyagraha

1915

Mahatma Gandhi  
arrives in India



1919

Massacre at Jallianwalla  
Bagh in Amritsar

1931

Gandhi-Irwin  
talks in the  
Viceroy House

1919

Government passes  
the Rowlatt Act

1928

Simon  
Commission arrives

1922

Non- cooperation  
movement

1919

Montague  
Chelmsford Act

1930

Civil Disobedience and  
Dandi March









सत्यमेव जयते



**W**e all watch the President of India go down Rajpath in the black and gold horse carriage to take the salute on Republic Day. We also listen to him giving a speech on television before our Independence Day and before joint sessions of parliament. But do you know exactly what it is that the president does in the government? What are his responsibilities?

It all begins with the Constitution of India. Our constitution says that the president is the head of the Republic of India and is the first citizen of the country. He is also the commander-in-chief of the armed forces. He does not belong to any political party and it is his duty to act according to the rules laid down in the constitution. Our government is of three parts – the executive, the parliament and the judiciary. The president is the head of the executive which is made up of the prime minister and his council of ministers.





# ELECTING A PRESIDENT

---



*President Pranab Mukherjee meeting guests*

**T**he people do not vote directly for the president. He is elected by members of the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha and the members of the state legislative assemblies. This is called an Electoral College and the members vote for the various candidates. To become the president the person has to be an Indian citizen, over thirty-five years of age and have all the qualifications that are also required to stand for election for the Lok Sabha.

The president is elected for a term of five years and he can be elected for one more term. He is sworn in by the Chief Justice of India and in his oath he swears to protect the Constitution of India.





# ROLE OF THE PRESIDENT

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**A**fter a general election to the Lok Sabha the president invites the political party that has got the majority to form the government. He appoints the leader of the party as the prime minister and on his advice he gives the oath of office to the ministers. The president acts only with the advice of the council of ministers that is headed by the prime minister.

Dr B.R. Ambedkar who was the Chairman of the Drafting Committee for the Indian Constitution described the role of the president in our parliamentary form of government as that of a constitutional head who, 'occupies the same position as the king under the English Constitution. He is the head of the state but not of the executive. He represents the nation but does not rule the nation.'

*President A. P. J. Abdul Kalam with children*





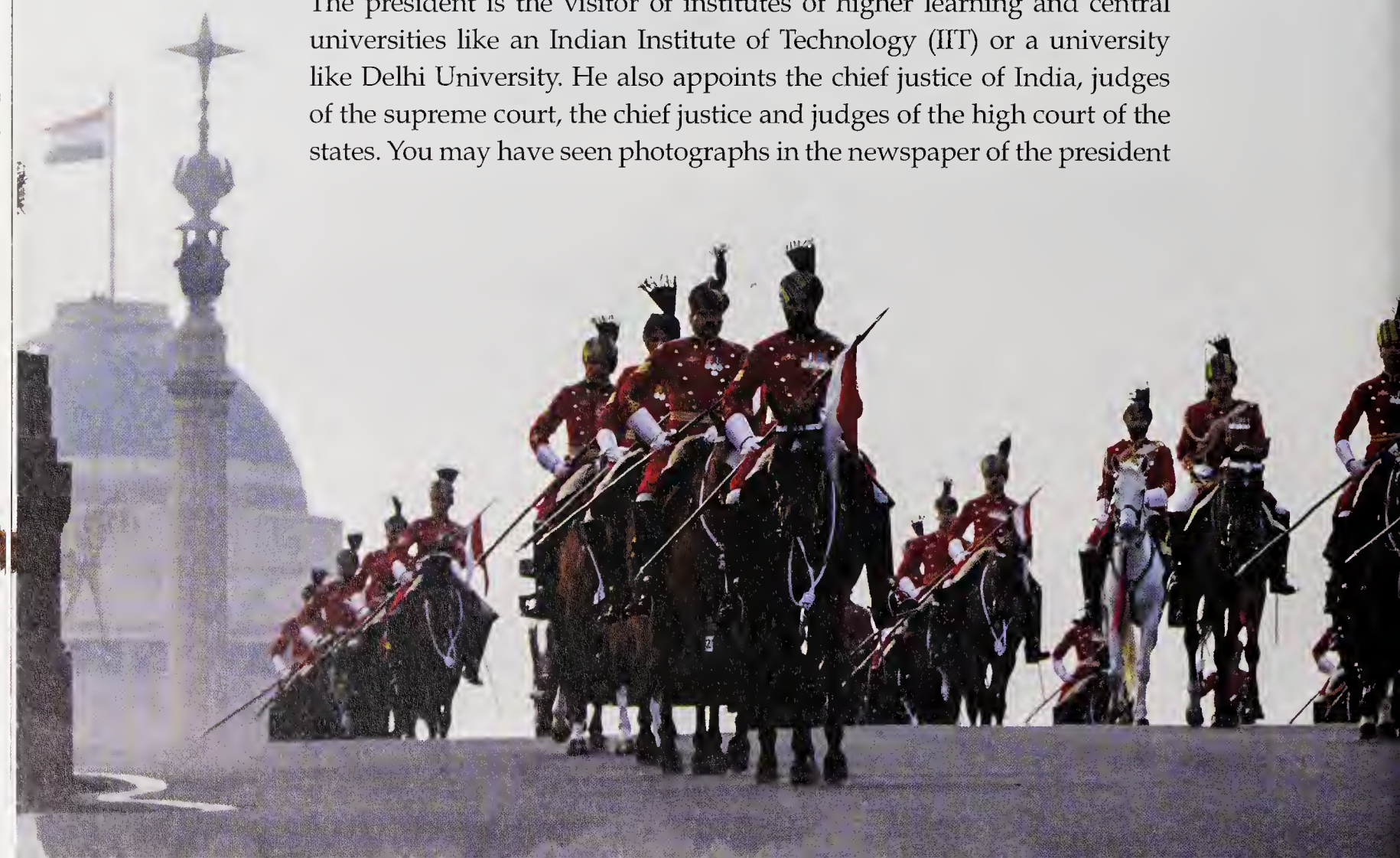


The president has an important role in the two houses of parliament. He can summon both or one house of parliament for a session. He addresses both houses in the first session of each year. He also has the power to dissolve the Lok Sabha.

No act of parliament can become law without the approval of the president. When both houses of parliament pass a bill it has to be signed by the president before it becomes law. If it is not a money bill, then he can send it back for re-consideration but if parliament passes it again then he has to sign it. He does not have the power to veto a bill like the President of the United States of America.

The president is the Supreme Commander of the Indian armed forces – the army, navy and the air force. He can declare war or declare peace when it has been approved by parliament. He also appoints officials like the chief election commissioner and the attorney general on the advice of the prime minister.

The president is the visitor of institutes of higher learning and central universities like an Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) or a university like Delhi University. He also appoints the chief justice of India, judges of the supreme court, the chief justice and judges of the high court of the states. You may have seen photographs in the newspaper of the president





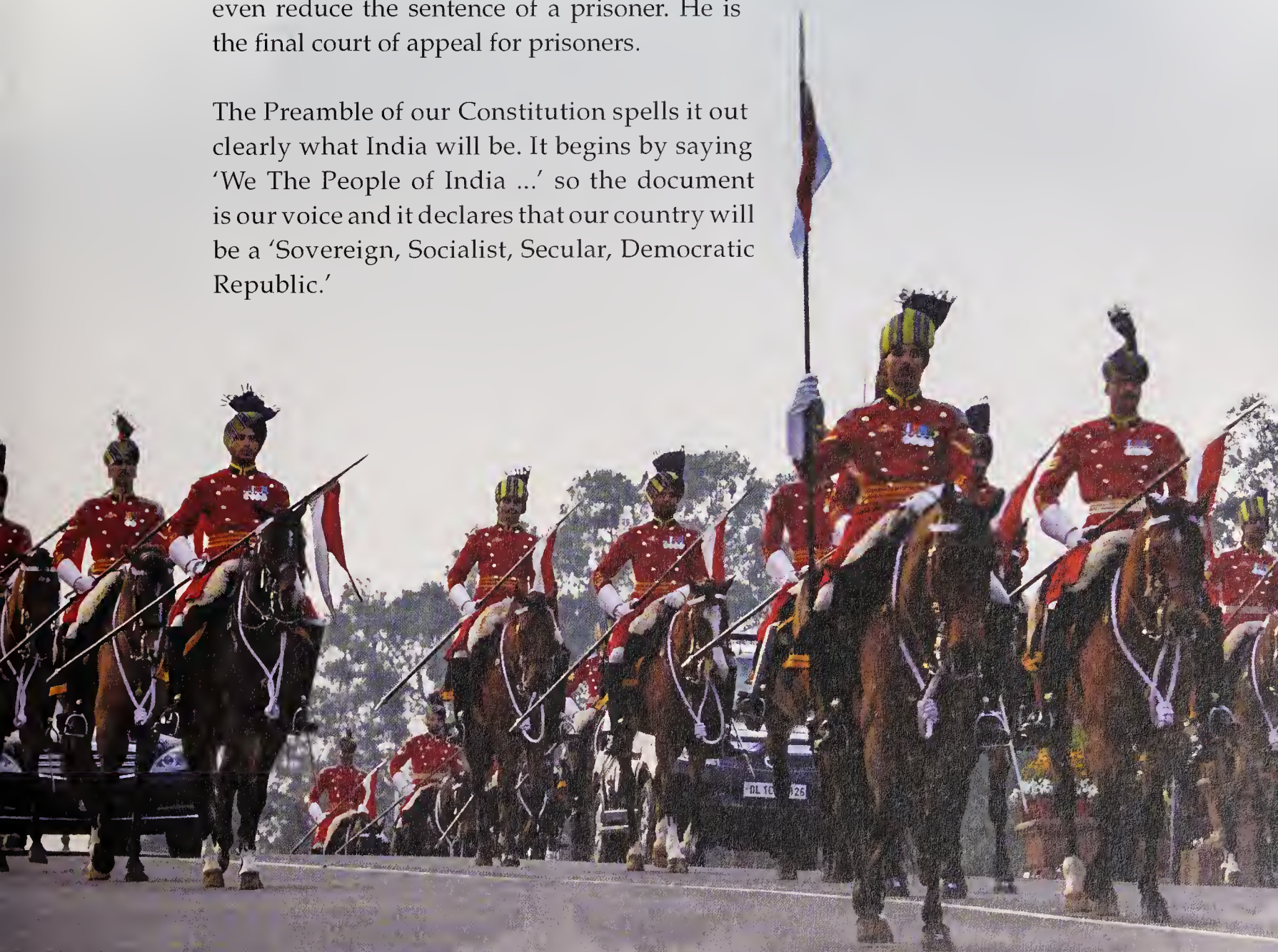


meeting the ambassador of another country. This is because he accepts the credentials of newly appointed ambassadors of other countries coming to India and also appoints Indian envoys who are going abroad.

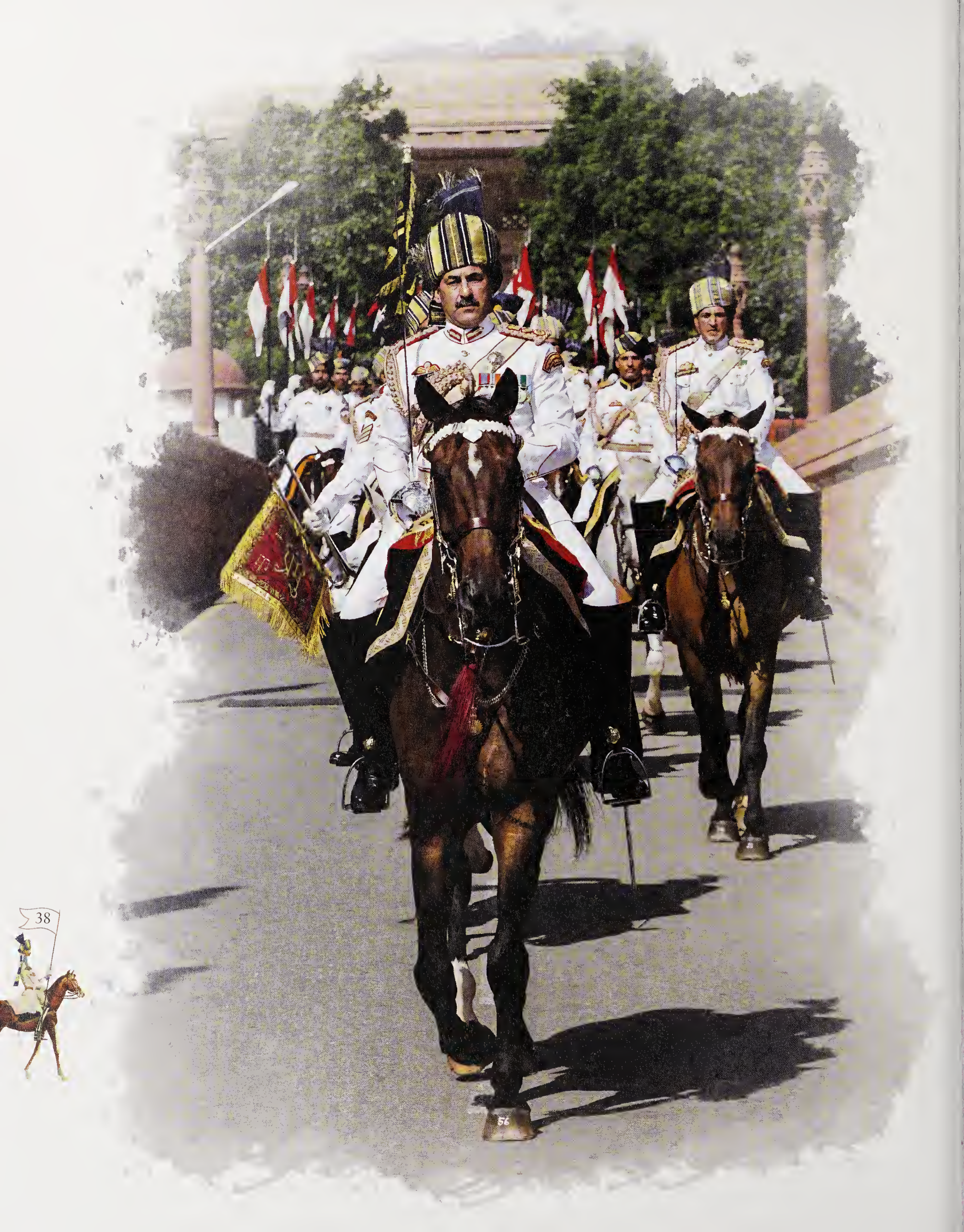
Once again at the advice of the council of ministers he can declare a state of emergency like during a state of war. He can also declare President's Rule in a state if the state government has failed. Then during a President's Rule the bureaucrats report to the governor of the state. However the president cannot declare President's Rule at the Centre and take over the executive powers. This was done to make sure that we did not get a dictatorship.

The president also has the power to pardon anyone given a death sentence by the law courts or even reduce the sentence of a prisoner. He is the final court of appeal for prisoners.

The Preamble of our Constitution spells it out clearly what India will be. It begins by saying 'We The People of India ...' so the document is our voice and it declares that our country will be a 'Sovereign, Socialist, Secular, Democratic Republic.'











# THE PRESIDENT'S BODYGUARD



## OF VALOUR AND CEREMONY



Once you have seen the President's Bodyguard (PBG) riding past, you will never forget them. Every year on 26th January, braving the mist and chill of the winter morning, people gather to watch the Republic Day parade in the national capital. And the PBG are the first to trot down Raisina Hill and then along Rajpath escorting the horse carriage of the President of India.

The spectators spontaneously break into applause as the rows of cavalymen in their smart red and gold uniform ride by on their glossy brown steeds. Eyes firmly forward, sitting ramrod straight in their saddles, the pennants flying on top of their lances as their blue and gold turbans flare up and medals glitter proudly on their chests, they recreate a colourful past of courage and valour.







Then a snapped command echoes through the air –

***“Rashtrapati angrakshak salaami denge,  
Rashtriya salute! Madhya dekh! “***

(The President's Bodyguard will give a salute,

The national salute! Eyes centre!)

The salute is for the president who is the Supreme Commander of the Indian Armed Forces. Then the 21 gun- salute booms out, as the tricolour national flag unfurls to the beat of the national anthem. The PBG are a perfect symbol of our proud and brave army, of all the soldiers who have dedicated their lives to the nation.

The PBG is an elite household cavalry regiment and the oldest regiment of the Indian Army. The regiment was raised as far back as 1773 by the English Governor General, Warren Hastings in Benares and it was called 'the Guard of Moguls'. It was led by officers of the East India Company, the trading company that had colonised India. Later the regiment came to be called the 'Governor General's Bodyguard' (GGBG) and that was their title when India became independent. With the Partition of India in 1947, some personnel of the regiment were transferred to the Pakistan Army and new riders were recruited. Since 1950, when India proclaimed itself a Republic, the regiment has been known as the PBG.







*The badge of the PBG with the Ashokan lions.*

Hastings picked 50 soldiers and horses from a unit that had been raised by two local chieftains and then Raja Chait Singh of Benares added 50 more. In 1773 the regiment was a cavalry unit – that means the soldiers rode horses, and the main job of the regiment was to protect the governor. In those days the governor generals were army officers, so the regiment had to guard him when he was leading his forces in the battlefield. As the regiment charter said, ‘To act as Bodyguard to the Governor in peace and to accompany him as Commander-in-Chief in battle.’

Today, the PBG is a small cavalry regiment of four officers, 17 Junior Commissioned Officers (JCO) and 161 bodyguards, backed by an administrative support staff. They are based at the Rashtrapati Bhavan and their first role is to escort and protect the President of India. We are all familiar with their ceremonial duties as mounted troops during peacetime. What we do not know is that they are also trained for active duties on the battlefield as paratroopers and are equipped with armoured cars. So the soldiers are also trained as tank men and paratroopers. During peacetime the PBG riders excel in equestrian sports like polo and show jumping.

The PBG soldier respects and lives for the regiment’s *naam* (honour), *namak* (loyalty) and *nishan* (regimental colours).





# GOING TO BATTLE

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**D**uring the rule of the British, the PBG took on responsibilities beyond protecting the governor general when they were sent overseas to fight in other countries. In the nineteenth century the regiment saw action on the battlefield in many places like Egypt (1801), Java (1811), Burma (1824 and 1886); and in West Asia and Mesopotamia during the First World War. In India, they took part in the Mysore, Maratha, Rohilla and Sikh wars. Over the following century horses were no longer used on the battlefield, so during the Second World War the role of the regiment's soldiers changed from being cavalrymen to paratroopers to form a part of the 44th Indian Airborne Division during the Allied invasion of Malaya.

The year 1947, when India became independent, was a time of great turmoil because of the partition of the country. There were riots across north India and the guardsmen stationed in Delhi played an important part in helping the public and maintaining peace. Led by Risaldar Tara Singh they escorted Muslim refugees to safety. Then in 1950 India became a Republic with a president replacing the British viceroy. So the name of the regiment was changed from being the 'Governor General's Bodyguard' to the 'President's Bodyguard' and its triumphs on the battlefield also continued.







During the war against China in 1962, the PBG armoured cars were deployed at a height of 14,000 feet in the snowy heights of the Himalayas to defend Chushul. Then in 1965 the regiment saw action in the western front during 'Operation Ablaze' to push out forays of Pakistan into the Indian territory; in 1988 it was stationed in Sri Lanka as a part of the Indian Peace Keeping Force. The PBG has also been part of the Indian team of the United Nations contingents in Somalia, Angola and Sierra Leone.

The highest, coldest and most difficult battlefield in the world is on the snowy slopes of the Siachen Glacier in Jammu & Kashmir. This glacier on the Karakoram Range of the Himalayas is at a height of 6,000 metre and is the highest battleground in the world with the temperature going as low as minus 86 degree centigrade! The icy blizzards rise to a wind speed of 300 kilometre per hour. It is one of the most physically demanding locations in which our army has to operate. The tough and valiant PBG troopers continue to serve there with great courage and distinction.

So the soldiers of the PBG do not just play a ceremonial role but also are disciplined soldiers who have been honed to the most complex combat skills. They are trained for many skills beyond being impeccable riders dazzling their audience with the panache of their ceremonial riding.





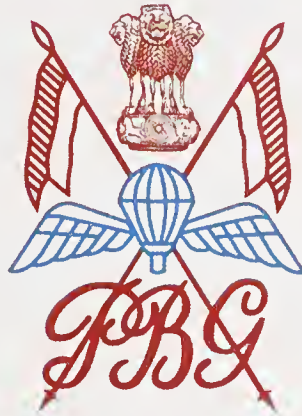


PBG soldiers on the snowy slopes of the Siachen Glacier in Jammu Kashmir



# BADGE AND STANDARD

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Like all regiments, the PBG has its own traditions and ceremonies. As a mounted unit the PBG has a regimental standard that symbolises the honour and pride of the regiment. When the standard is carried in parade it is always with a mounted and armed escort and is saluted by the regiment as it moves to the head of the mounted corps. The spectators stand as a mark of respect as the regimental standard and its escort pass by.

The Badge of the PBG shows the Ashokan lions that are the symbol of the Republic of India and it is held aloft on an open parachute and crossed lances with red and white pennants. Below is inscribed the initials 'PBG'. This symbolises the double role played by the PBG as a cavalry and an airborne unit of the army. The motto of the PBG is 'Bharat Mata ki Jai' (victory to Mother India) and they march to the rousing song 'Sare jahan se achha Hindustan hamara'. The colours of the regiment are sky blue and maroon like that of the other airborne divisions.













# HORSES AND RIDERS

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*The soldiers of the PBG excel in equestrian sports*

**T**he PBG sowar goes through rigorous six months of training in riding. They learn to ride bareback, vaulting, dressage, grooming, saddling, foot drill, sword drill and lance drill. After completion of training, as troopers stationed at the Rashtrapati Bhavan, their day starts at the stables before dawn as they personally care for their horse, washing and massaging it and supervising the feed. At daybreak the horses and their riders head out to the parade ground, emerging from the Rashtrapati Bhavan to trot along the public road in a grand spectacle. The riders on their brown horses, clad in olive green breeches and maroon turbans, create in our minds an eternal image of a cavalry on the march.







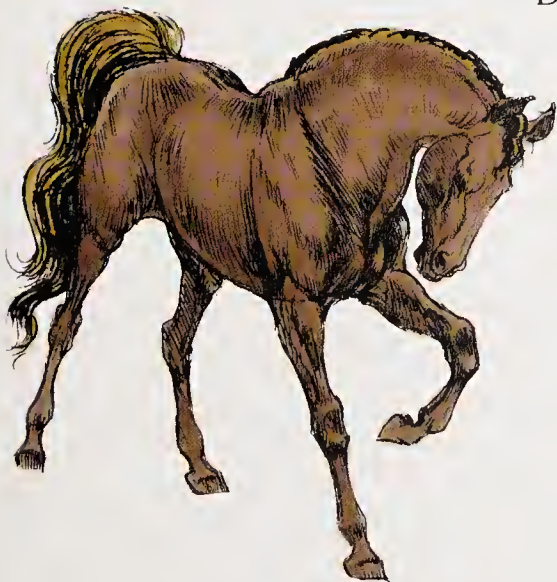
You may have noticed that the PBG horses are always a glossy, golden brown in colour that is called 'bay' except that of the regimental trumpeter who is always mounted on a grey charger. The horses are the only ones in the Indian Army that are permitted to wear full manes. This is like the horses in the Household Cavalry of Queen Elizabeth of Great Britain.

There are three kinds of horses in the stables – the chargers that perform in the mounted parades, the polo ponies and the coach horses that pull the presidential carriage. What is even more interesting is that the riders have to be of a minimum height of 1.83 metre or 6-feet tall and their horses measured at the shoulders have to be 15.2 hands or 1.57 metre high.

The horses are specially trained for parades as they practice trotting, cantering and galloping. They learn to march in a perfect line, stand still for long periods and they are taken on strolls within the Presidential Estate and also along public roads so that they get used to crowds and traffic. The horses learn to handle the noise of the gun salute, the fly-past by the fighter planes of the air force and even the noise of drums, firecrackers and loud music. The elegant and flawless parades show the perfect bond that is shared between the rider and his horse.

Now you may wonder, it is fine to ride horses during peacetime ceremonies but what do the PBG soldiers ride when they move on the battlefield? The mechanical mounts of the PBG have been various

Daimler and Humber armoured cars equipped with 2 pounder and 37mm cannons and machine guns.









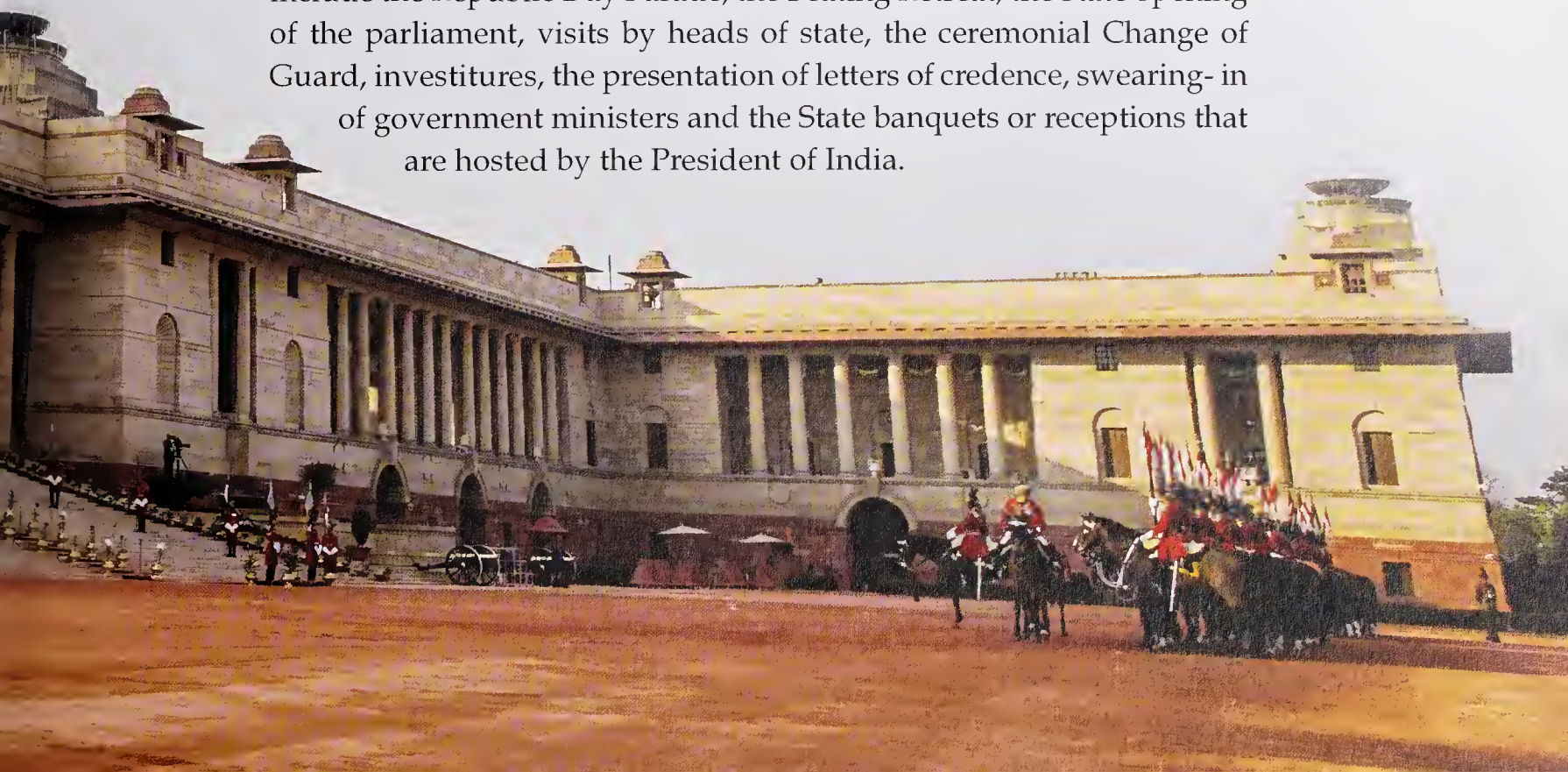
# TRUMPET AND TRUMPET BANNER

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**T**he PBG also has the unique distinction of being the only military unit of the Indian Army that is privileged to carry the president's silver trumpet and the trumpet banner. Every new president presents a new trumpet banner, with its own initials, at a presentation ceremony held in the forecourt of the Rashtrapati Bhavan with an exciting display of the riding skills of the soldiers.

At the time when the cavalry went to fight on the battlefield, the trumpet players were essential to give the signals. Today the Trumpet Major plays the trumpet to call for reveille, mount, midday and evening parades and lights out and plays a tune called the 'Tattoo'. The sound of the trumpet is still a part of our parades.

The PBG is a vibrant part of all important ceremonial occasions at the Rashtrapati Bhavan or at places where the president is present. These include the Republic Day Parade, the Beating Retreat, the State opening of the parliament, visits by heads of state, the ceremonial Change of Guard, investitures, the presentation of letters of credence, swearing-in of government ministers and the State banquets or receptions that are hosted by the President of India.





# THE UNIFORMS AND REGALIAS

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*The PBG soldiers in full regalia*

The uniform that the PBG soldiers wear today should give you an idea of how soldiers looked in the nineteenth century because the ceremonial uniform dates back to the 1890s. There is the blue and gold ceremonial turban with that distinctive fan that flares upward proudly. The turban is called 'lungi style' with the fan shaped comb being the 'turra'. The soldiers wear a red long double-breasted coat with black breeches in winter and a white coat in summer with white breeches. They tie a gold girdle at the waist.

In one hand the rider holds a special 10 feet, 9-inch long cavalry lance balanced in a stirrup lance bucket. The lance is topped by a red and white cavalry pennant that flutters in the breeze as the mounted bodyguards ride past. The saddled horses are adorned with the embroidered saddle cloths called shabraque, neck ornaments and white brow bands.





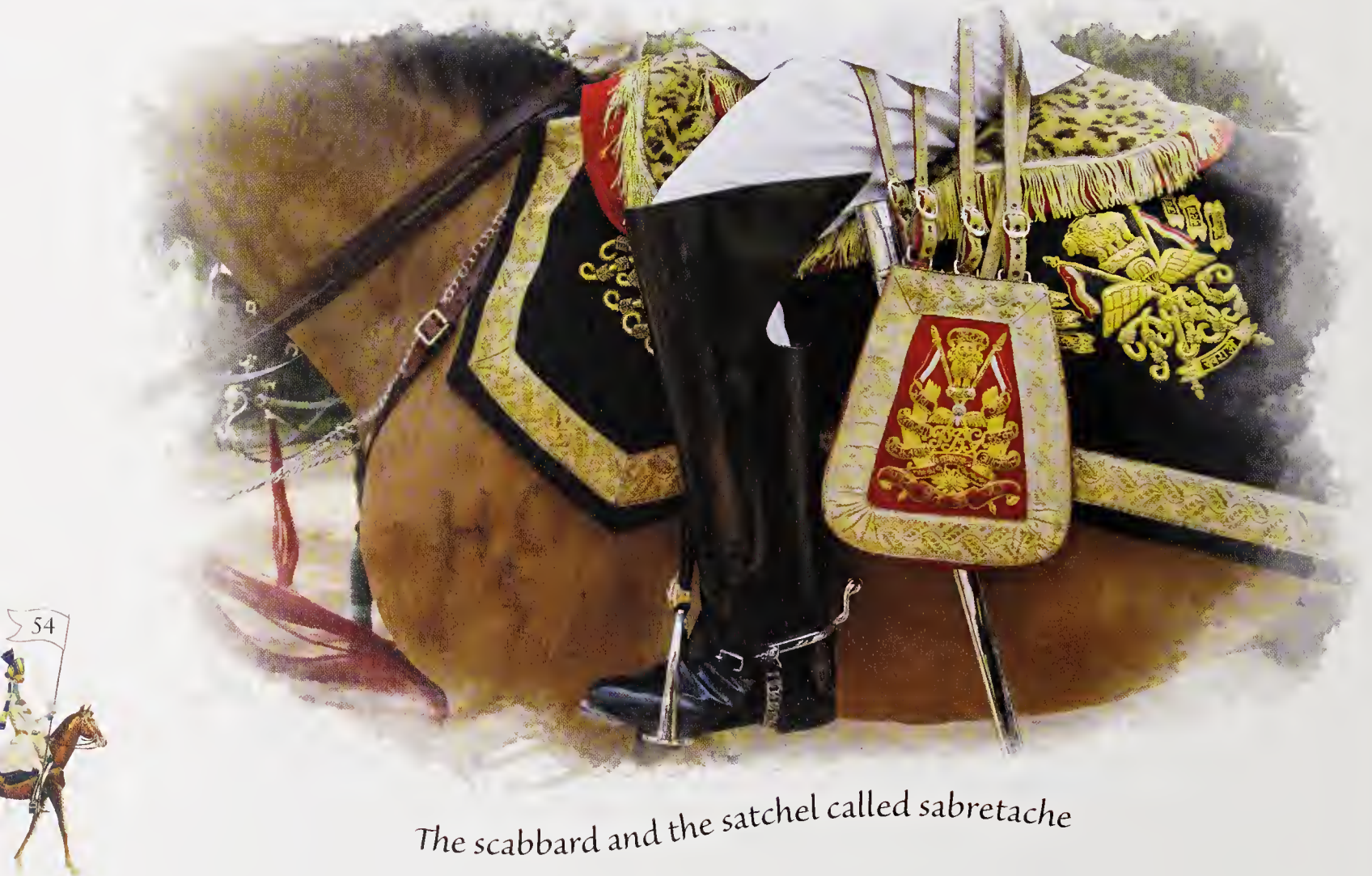






The sowars carry lances and the officers hold swords. A cavalry sabre is a heavy cavalry sword with a curving blade and a sheathed sabre is carried at the side of the saddle by each trooper. The wings of a trained combat parachutist embroidered in gold shines at the breast of each soldier next to the row of medals that they have won.

The officers and the JCOs wear two rather eye-catching accessories on their heavily embroidered tunics. First there are the gold aiguillettes or braided loops that fall across the chest ending in tagged points that hang from the shoulder. Then they carry open sabres in their right hand when on parade, with the scabbards supported in a scarlet and gold sabretache(a flat satchel on long straps worn from the left of the waist belt).



*The scabbard and the satchel called sabretache*



# CHANGE OF GUARD

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**W**hen Edwin Lutyens was designing the building he always kept the presence of these 'magnificent men and their splendid mounts' in mind. All the entrances to the forecourt are designed for a horse and rider. Then at the two sides of the main gates there are two red sandstone arches with curved roofs that are especially for the mounted guardsmen. The soldier and his horse stand there framed by the arch, looking like sculpture come alive.

You can see the PBG in all their equestrian splendour during a 30-minute ceremony called 'Change of Guard' that takes place in the forecourt of the Rashtrapati Bhavan every Saturday.

There is an ancient tradition in fortresses and palaces, of a ceremony in the morning, when the soldiers who had been guarding the gates at night are changed by a new team of guards. At the Rashtrapati Bhavan the rows of troopers in their ceremonial regalia riding their powerful and well-groomed steeds move out from behind the Jaipur Column to the Forecourt. They march to the tune of 'Ma tujhe salaam' played by the Army Brass Band. Then to the beat of the music there are exciting equestrian displays as the guards are changed with great pomp and splendour.

*A nineteenth century PBG sowar*







Just as a PBG soldier shows admirable equestrian talent and wins admiration and praise at their amazing shows of riding skills they are also an elite regiment of the Indian Army ever ready to move to the battlefield to defend their motherland.

*The changing of the guards ceremony before the Jaipur Column*









# FASCINATING Facts

1 Some commands of the PBG:

**'Tol Ballam!'**

(Trail Lance)

**'Baju Ballam!'**

(Order Lance)

**'Rashtrapati Angrakshak Hoshiar!'**

(President's Bodyguard Attention!)

**'Dulki Chaal!'**

(To trot)

2 Among the battle honours of the GGBG were Java (1811), Ava (1826), Mahrajpore (1843), Moodkee and Ferozshah (1845).

3 The horses for the PBG are bred at the Equine Breeding Stud at Babugarh and Hissar. They are trained at the Remount Training School at Saharanpur and Hampur.

4 The horses often have very colourful names that reflect the trust and affection their riders feel for them, like Kirtiman, Mastana, Titan, Fariyad, Sangharsh, Tara, Valiant, etc.



5  
The horses are fed barley, gram, bran and salt and given four feeds every day.

6  
The titles of the soldiers were taken from the Mughal times. A sowar is one who rides. A dafadar controls a body of troops. A risaldar leads a 100 cavalymen and the naib risaldar is second in command to the risaldar.

7  
The soldiers are helped by a team of support staff like grooms at the stables, the tailor who makes their uniforms, the regimental equipment repairer and the ferrier who make and put on the horses' shoes.

8  
An advertisement that was published in 1937 in the magazine Punch for tobacco had a photograph of the GGBG soldiers and the headline said 'Part of the Empire'.

9  
The first British commandant of the GGBG in 1773 was Captain Sweny Toone. The last was Major P. Massey in 1945. The first Indian commandant was Major Thakur Govind Singh who was appointed in 1950 by Lord Mountbatten.

10  
In 1948 when Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated, the PBG escorted the cortege from Birla House to Rajghat through a crowd of thousands of mourners.

11  
In the first few years the Republic Day Parade was also held at Red Fort and Chandni Chowk until the venue was fixed at Rajpath.



# A VERY SPECIAL PARADE



Pratap wrapped a prickly woollen shawl around himself and stepped out of his room. Then he smiled as he heard a low snore behind him. His roommate Arjan was still lost in the world of dreams.

'If I didn't wake him up,' Pratap thought in amusement, 'Arjan would be late every day for the morning exercises.' Then an idea crept into his head, 'May be I should let him sleep on ... then Risaldar Saheb would yell at him instead of me.'

It was a cold Delhi January morning and the sun was just a glow behind the swirling mist around the row of single story, white-washed rooms where Pratap and Arjan lived. The soldier's barracks stood near the stables where the horses were kept and in one of the stalls there was a restless, young, dark brown horse called Badal.







TAFEL  
GMA





Badal was Pratap's horse and right now he was very angry with his four-legged friend.

'I should have named him Badmash instead of Badal,' Pratap sighed deeply, a puff of misty breath floating out in the chilly air. 'If he does not behave himself today I'm finished! Risaldar Saheb will sack me immediately and I'll have to go back to the village and work in the bajra fields instead of being a soldier.'

Pratap would never forget the day he became a soldier – 17th October 1949 and now three months later it was January 1950 and he really felt like a cavalry trooper. That day he had completed his training and become Sowar Pratap Singh of the army regiment called the Governor General's Bodyguard, or as they all called it, the GGBG. He was now a cavalryman like his father and grandfather before him. He was a sowar and they were soldiers who could fight with guns and also ride a horse.

One morning as they were working in the stables, brushing down their horses, Arjan had said, 'Did you know that now the regiment is to be called the President's Bodyguard?'

'Everything's changing isn't it?' Pratap stopped to rest for a moment, leaning against Badal's warm and friendly horsy back. 'Once this was the Viceroy House and now it's called ...' he frowned, trying to remember the name, '... something pati ... something...'

'Rashtrapati Bhavan!' Arjan grinned, 'The President's House. They won't let you in at the gates if you forget where you live you idiot!'

'Rashtrapati Bhavan ... Rashtrapati Bhavan...' Pratap tried to memorise the name as Badal stuck a curious head over his shoulder with a soft snort. 'Oh stop it Badal! Can't you stay still for a moment?' Badal breathed even harder, going 'huffll ... puffll...' into Pratap's face. 'Carrot huh?' said Pratap and Badal straightened, ready for his snack, making







Arjan and Pratap laugh.

'You know sometimes I think Badal understands every word you say,' and Arjan's horse who was named Dilawar turned and stared at him. 'Okay, okay, you Dilawar are smarter!' and Dilawar stomped his front foot as if he agreed.

'You know if the others heard us talking to our horses they would think we are mad,' Pratap said.

'No they won't! They all talk to their horses, even Risaldar Saheb.'

'Really? I wonder what he says...' Pratap thought of their officer, Risaldar Baldeo Singh's face with the luxurious moustache curving across his plump cheeks; the deep-set eyes that seemed to read his mind; the thick, bushy eyebrows that were always crossed in a frown.

'May be I'll try to listen one day.'



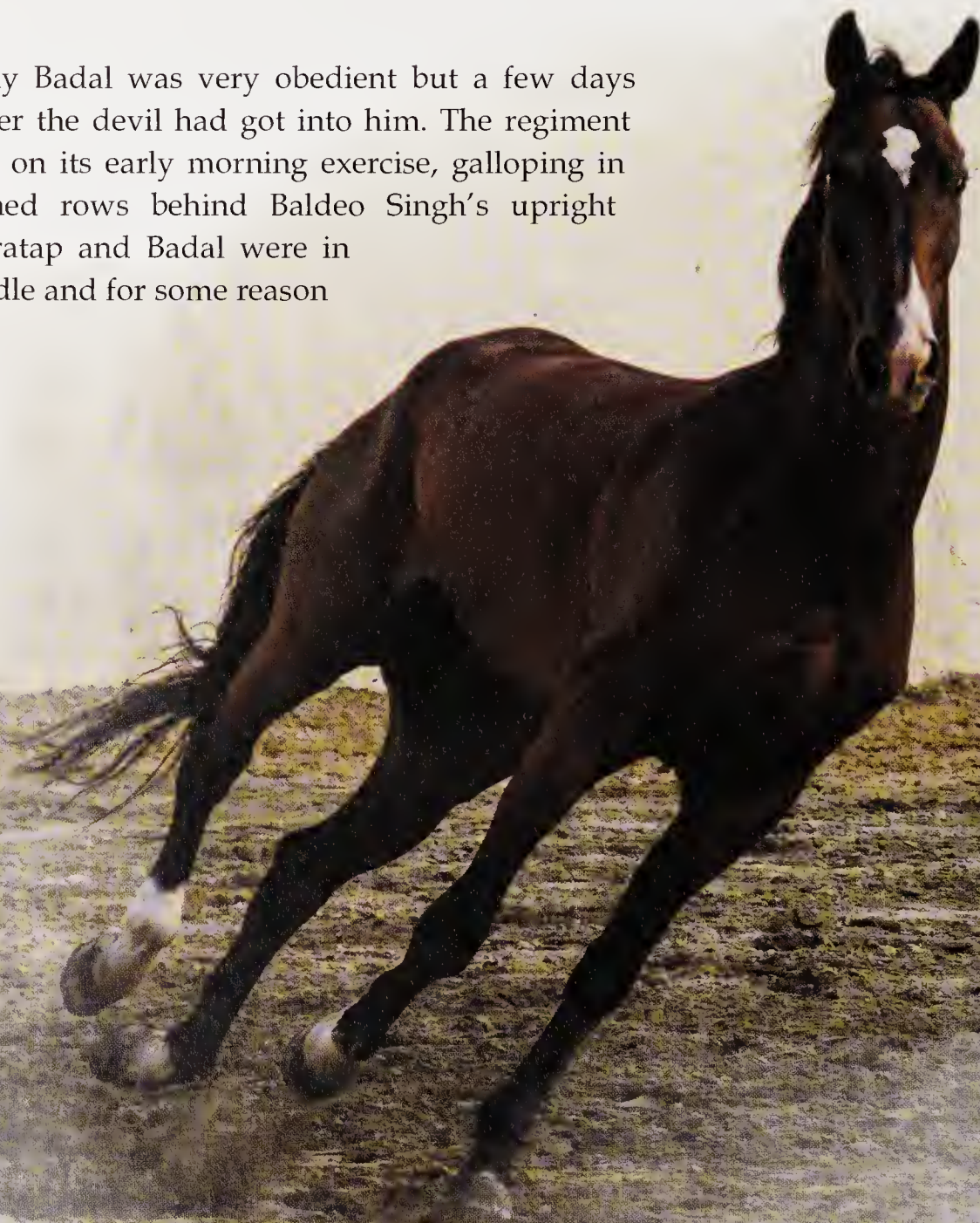




'Hah! You'll never know because every time you spot him you go and hide behind a tree.'

'Ohhh... I'm really scared of him and when Badal makes mistakes I'm in real trouble.' As if in apology Badal shoved a cold nose against Pratap's neck and gave a soft snuffle, 'Fine! Apology accepted,' Pratap muttered at his horse.

Usually Badal was very obedient but a few days earlier the devil had got into him. The regiment was out on its early morning exercise, galloping in disciplined rows behind Baldeo Singh's upright back. Pratap and Badal were in the middle and for some reason







Badal began pulling at the reins as if he wanted to run a race. Pratap somehow managed to complete the gallop without trouble but it left him sweating.

Next day they began rehearsing for what was going to be Pratap's first parade. A few days before Baldeo Singh had called them together in the mess to explain what was going to happen on 26th January 1950.

'It will be our first Republic Day,' he had barked at his men, 'and we will escort our president or rashtrapati who will be riding in his buggy down King's Way...' he stopped and stared at a chit of paper that he was holding, 'Nahin! Now the road is to be called Rajpath as we no longer have a king. The parade is to be called,' he read from the paper again, 'Republic Day Parade and it will take place every year on 26th January.'

The row of young faces stared silently back at him, looking a bit puzzled.

'Any questions?' Baldeo thundered at them.

A few tentative hands went up.

'Sir everything will get new names?'

'I have a list here. The Viceroy House is to be called the Rashtrapati Bhavan. The King's Way is Rajpath and Queen's Way is Janpath ... GGBG is now PBG as you all know... Yes Arjan?'

Arjan stood up and swallowed, 'Sir what is a Republic Day?' and the rows of faces leaned forward. No one had really understood this thing called a 'Republic Day Parade'.

'Good you asked. Yesterday it was all explained to the officers by the secretary to the president.' He cleared his throat, 'Even I was not very clear what it meant because I thought that once we had gained our freedom and the angrez had left India the story was over. Well, it looks like it is just a start. We now have a president and a prime minister.'







'The president is not our king and the prime minister is not like the viceroy then?' someone asked.

A small smile was visible under their risaldar's luxurious moustache as he shook his head. 'We choose our prime minister and he is an Indian because we are now a free country. Now the government is chosen by us!' He looked around, 'That is how we elect our government, by voting.'

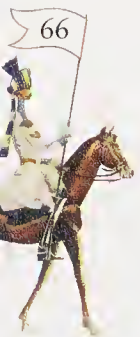
'So voting makes us a Republic?'

'A Republic is a government of the people, for the people and by the people. No one inherits the throne like a king and no one decides anything without our consent like the viceroy used to do. If we do not like what the government is doing then we can vote them out in the next election. And it is all written down in a document that is called the Constitution of India.'

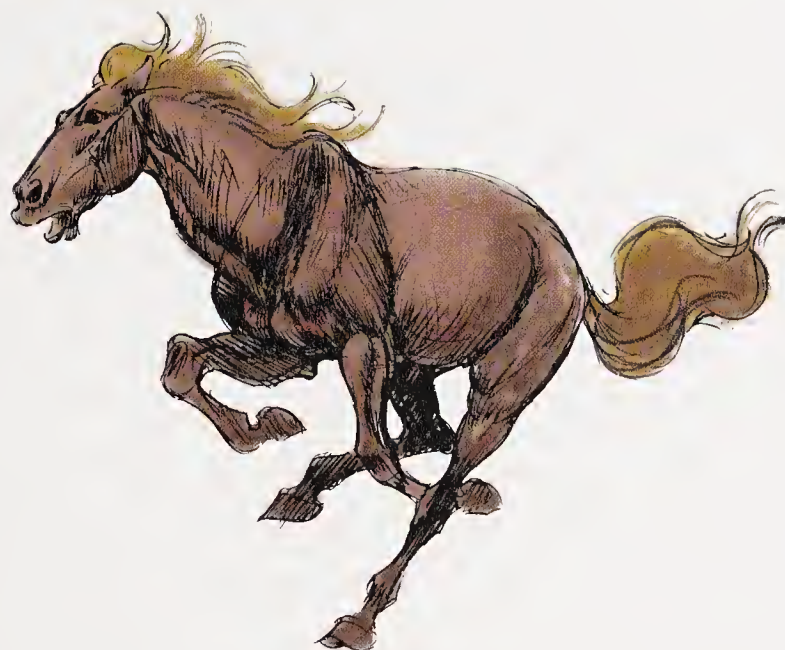
'So this parade is of the people, for the people and by the people...'  
Pratap said thoughtfully. 'It's our parade.'

'Very clever Pratap. You are right.'

When rehearsals for the parade began they stood in disciplined rows, sitting ramrod straight on their steeds, staring straight ahead, arms relaxed and holding the reins. The horses on both sides stood quiet and still but not Badal. He was dipping his head as if he wanted to slip off his bridle and then he raised his right leg and impatiently pawed the ground.







‘Kya kar raha hai badmash!’ Pratap muttered under his breath as he tightened the reins. Badal obeyed but Pratap could sense he was not happy at all.

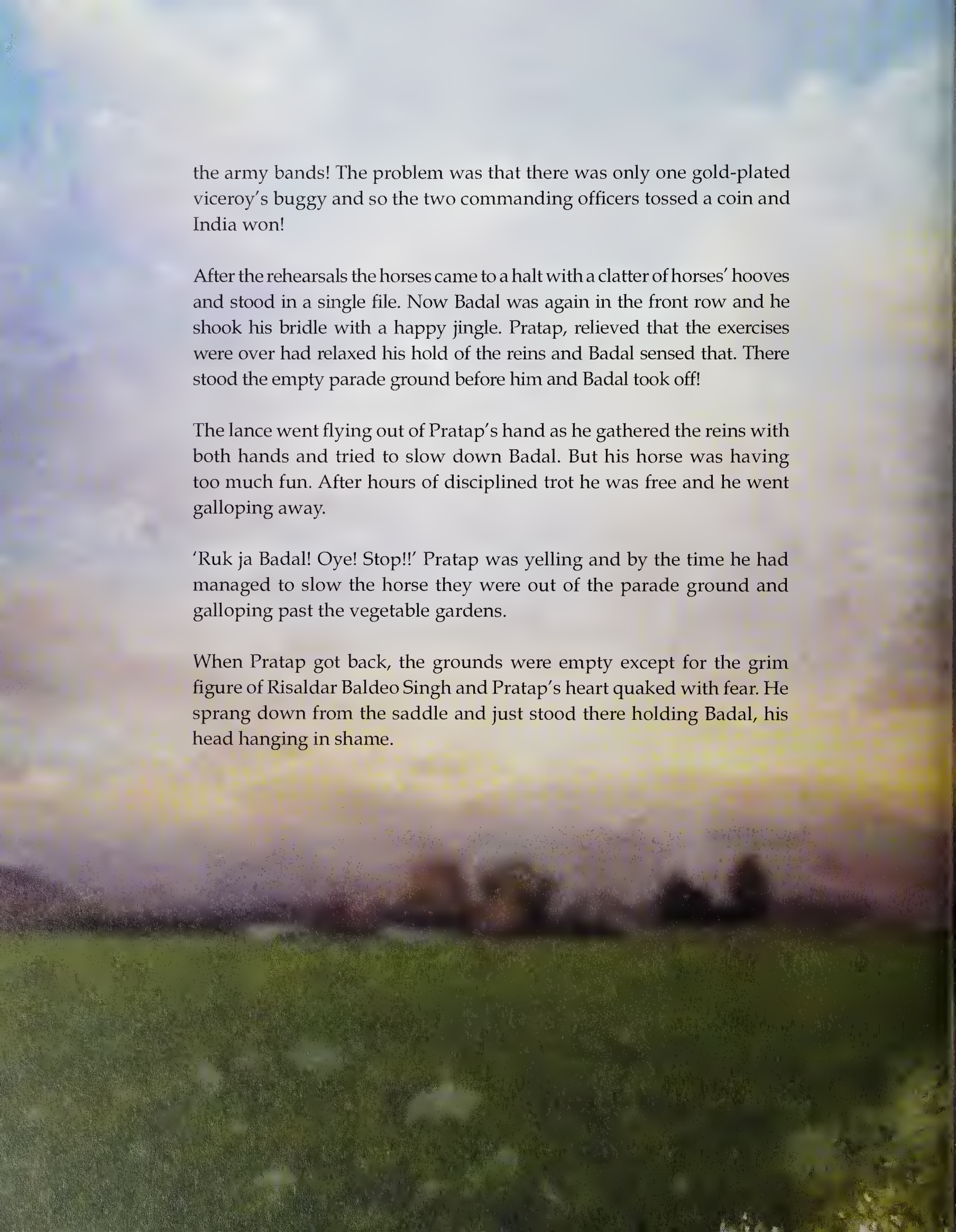
At a barking order from Baldeo Singh the horses rode out in rows of six, moving in line. Pratap and Badal were in the middle of the third row with horses on both sides. Also, Pratap was handling the reins with one hand as he was holding the lance with the pennant in the other. As Badal sensed the lighter hand on the rein he tossed his head but Pratap pulled the reins tight, used his knees and held him firmly in place.

They went trotting round and round the parade ground, moving with such graceful synchrony that it seemed the horses were marching, their legs moving together. Then they practised escorting the presidential buggy, an elegant carriage drawn by four horses, painted a shiny black with decorations in gold. Pratap remembered a story his father had told him about the gold-plated buggy.

In 1947 India was divided into two countries, India and Pakistan. Then everything in the government and the army had to be divided. Not just people but tables, chairs, cupboards, even the musical instruments of







the army bands! The problem was that there was only one gold-plated viceroy's buggy and so the two commanding officers tossed a coin and India won!

After the rehearsals the horses came to a halt with a clatter of horses' hooves and stood in a single file. Now Badal was again in the front row and he shook his bridle with a happy jingle. Pratap, relieved that the exercises were over had relaxed his hold of the reins and Badal sensed that. There stood the empty parade ground before him and Badal took off!

The lance went flying out of Pratap's hand as he gathered the reins with both hands and tried to slow down Badal. But his horse was having too much fun. After hours of disciplined trot he was free and he went galloping away.

'Ruk ja Badal! Oye! Stop!!' Pratap was yelling and by the time he had managed to slow the horse they were out of the parade ground and galloping past the vegetable gardens.

When Pratap got back, the grounds were empty except for the grim figure of Risaldar Baldeo Singh and Pratap's heart quaked with fear. He sprang down from the saddle and just stood there holding Badal, his head hanging in shame.









'You call yourself a sowar, Pratap Singh?' bellowed the risaldar. 'When you can't even control your horse!!' and the angry words flowed over his bent head such that even Badal became quiet. The final words rang in his head as he walked Badal back morosely to the stables. 'One more action like this Pratap Singh and you are out of the parade! This is your last chance!!'

At the stables the others watched Pratap as he unstrapped the girth buckles and took off the saddle. He wiped off the sweat on Badal, gave him his water and feed and in absolute silence he walked out. He was feeling oddly dazed and hardly ate anything at lunch.

Pratap had to get away from everyone and their questions and so he walked through the estate until he came to a patch of the Delhi Ridge with trees where monkeys ran about and sat under the shade of a peepal tree. Somewhere a peacock called out and that reminded him of home.







Home was a tiny village in Rajasthan, near the fortress of Jodhpur. Their family had a few acres of fields but the men all tried to join the army and often they got into the GGBG as sowars because they had one advantage, they were all very tall. To join the Bodyguard unit you had to be at least 6-feet tall and Pratap's grandfather had carved out a mark on the wooden door of their home and since he was a teenager Pratap had anxiously measured himself to see if he had reached the height.

Now his family was on its way to Delhi. On 26th January they were going to be at Rajpath waiting to see him ride past. That is if Badal would let him do so.

'Ah there you are!' Pratap turned to see Arjan striding up the path. 'Well Rana Pratap, how are you feeling now?'

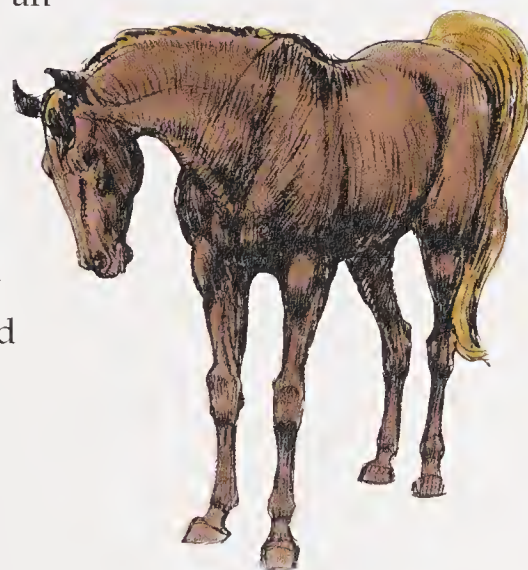
'Don't call me Rana Pratap,' he muttered.

'Well the Rana had Chetak and you have Badal...' Arjan grinned. 'Stop being so gloomy, he'll behave tomorrow.'

'How can you be so sure?' Pratap shook his head. 'Want to hear what the risaldar said to me? If Badal misbehaves again I'm out of the parade. And the family is already on the train to Delhi. I can't let them down.'

'Do you know why Badal bolted? He's usually an obedient horse.'

'Exactly! He's never been troublesome like this. I have been thinking about it. There was something he was trying to tell me today. He only acts up when he is anxious but what could possibly be making him anxious?' Pratap sat staring into space and said broodingly, 'What is he trying to tell me?'







That night Pratap couldn't sleep. Next day was a dress rehearsal – with them wearing the full regalia, turbans, lances and flags and all. He sat and stared across the estate to the shadowy silhouette of the Rashtrapati Bhavan that stood out against the starry sky. They were not allowed to go inside and so it was the dome and the chhatra pavilions on the roof that he saw every day.

Only once Baldeo Singh had taken them inside and they had seen in amazement the huge assembly halls with gleaming marble floors, the banquet halls, sitting rooms, all decorated with luxurious furniture, carpets in rich colours, the sculptures, paintings and silk curtains. In one room even the ceiling was painted! Most of them came from villages and found it all quite overwhelming.







'And now an Indian president will live there,' he thought with satisfaction, 'and I do want to be part of his parade. Oh Badal...'

Just then like a flash of lightening Pratap found the answer.

It was barely dawn when Pratap was lurking outside Risaldar Baldeo Singh's tiny single-story house. There was quietness all around, the windows were dark, so he sat hunched by the wall, shivering in the chill and waited. Then a light came on in one room and he was still trying to gather the courage to go up and knock on the door when he saw Baldeo Singh come out into the veranda.

He was still in his night clothes, loose kurta pyjamas, with a shawl wrapped around him and was holding a cup of tea. Pratap walked up, saluted and cleared his throat, 'Sir...'

Baldeo Singh stared at him in surprise, 'What are you doing here so early?'

'I'm sorry to disturb you sir,' his heart was thudding hard, 'but I need your advice about Badal...'

'That's your horse.'

'Ji'.

Baldeo Singh studied his anxious face and then said, 'Want some tea?'

A little surprised at not being yelled at, Pratap nodded.

A few minutes later they sat on chairs in the veranda. 'So Pratap,' Baldeo Singh asked, 'do you know what the problem is?'

'I think so sir. Badal does not like to be boxed in by other horses. That is the time he bolts. Every time he's been in the middle with horses all around him he's become nervous and restless.'







'Hmmm...'

'He's young sir. He'll learn, I'll train him but there's not enough time for the parade sir ... so I was thinking if you...'

'Let him ride in front?'

'Yes sir!' Pratap said in relief.

To his surprise a small smile was visible under Baldeo Singh's moustache, 'I was wondering how long it'll take you to work that out...'

'Oh you knew?'

'Badal is just like Teja, he likes to lead.'

'Teja? But that's your horse!'

'Correct. He is Badal's father and when he was young he did the same. He'd bolt if he was in the middle and so my risaldar always placed him in the front row corner slot so he felt he was leading the parade and Teja was fine.'

'Exactly!' Pratap leaned forward eagerly. 'Badal's just bossy and hates following another horse.'

'You worked it out faster than I did. It took me weeks and I nearly got thrown out of the regiment. From today you will ride front row, left hand corner.'

His heart light with relief, Pratap got up to leave but he had one final question, 'Does Teja still bolt?'

Baldeo Singh laughed, 'Nah! He's grown up but he still does not like it.'







'And now he really leads the parade...' and they laughed as Pratap gave a snappy salute, 'Thank you so much sir!'

'Go and get ready for the parade soldier.'

It was 26th January and Pratap and Arjan had been up since 4.30, brushing their maroon and gold uniforms, polishing the boots, putting on the turbans. Pratap studied his thin face in the mirror and said thoughtfully, 'I think I'll grow a moustache, just like Risaldar Saheb.'

'Did Rana Pratap have a moustache?' Arjan wanted to know.

'He did.'

As they rode down Raisina Hill the mist parted and the sun came out. The first president of the Democratic Republic of India, President Rajendra Prasad sat in the open buggy. Pratap saw with approval that unlike the viceroys with their expensive uniforms, shiny medals and sword he was clad in a simple sherwani and a Gandhi cap. And the cap made him think of Mahatma Gandhi and wish Bapu could have been here to watch this parade.

They went clip-clopping down Rajpath and Pratap could sense that Badal was





enjoying himself. He was in the front row, moving in smooth, fluid strides as if he was dancing to a tune in his head. He was also dressed-up for the occasion wearing ornaments around his forehead and neck.

Right in front rode Risaldar Baldeo Singh on Teja, with a shiny sword in his hand. A happy, colourful crowd had gathered on the lawns on both sides and somewhere Pratap knew that his family sat and they would spring up and shout and clap when they saw him. He of course would be looking straight ahead and will ride calmly past them like a real sowar of the President's Bodyguard.

Oh yes, this was a very special parade.







TARAS GUPTA...









# THE BUILDING



## WALKING AROUND THE RASHTRAPATI BHAVAN



**A**s you stand in the forecourt and look up at the Rashtrapati Bhavan, the brooding sandstone facade of giant stone pillars and sweeping staircases is very impressive and palatial. You know that it was designed as the residence of the British viceroy and his family but it doesn't feel like a place where people can live. Could children draw a hopscotch grid on the red gravel of the forecourt and jump about on one leg? Wouldn't they get lost if they tried to play hide and seek among the soaring pillars? Also there are these solemn soldiers standing around everywhere.

To find out more, let's take a walk through the interiors of the Rashtrapati Bhavan and what you'll see will surprise you. We'll enter the assembly halls and banquet rooms; stroll along the meandering







corridors and stand in courtyards filled with greenery. We'll peer into beautifully furnished drawing rooms; wander around museums filled with wonderful exhibits and listen to the soothing sound of water flowing out of fountains. The building is full of lovely touches of design and architecture and there are surprises and humorous elements that will delight you. In fact, the Rashtrapati Bhavan is not just impressive, it is also a very interesting place.

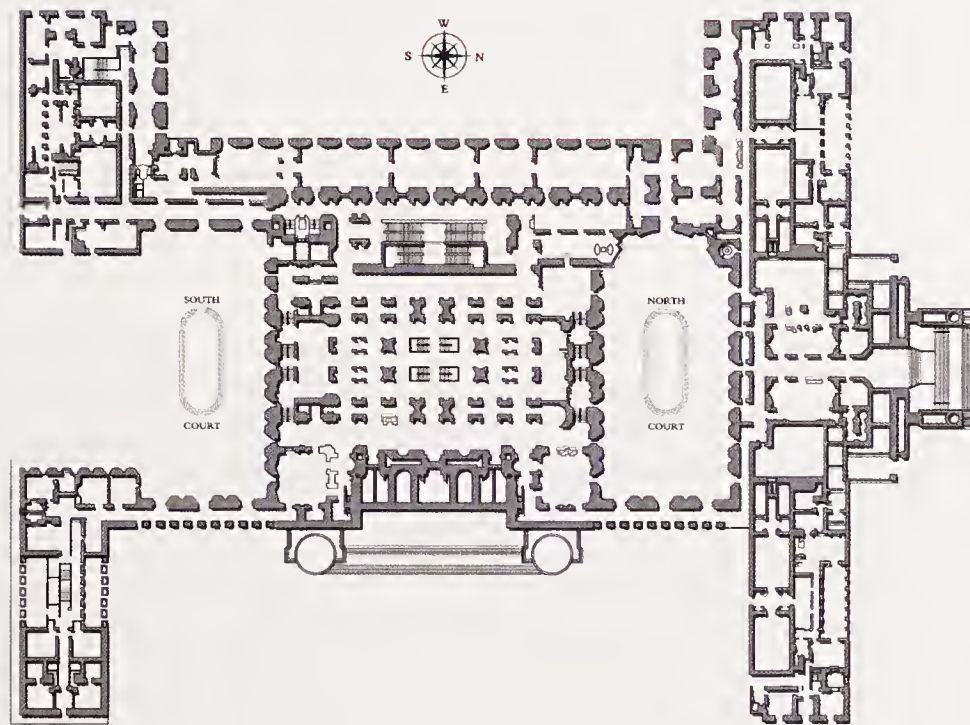
So we'll now read about what Edwin Lutyens designed and how the Viceroy House was built over eighteen long years. It later became our Rashtrapati Bhavan. We'll also hear the stories of the Indians who were part of the project and how the huge mansion is a testimony to the skills of Indian craftsmen.

*A row of carved elephants welcome visitors*





# THE CHALLENGE OF DESIGN



*An architectural drawing of the building*

Designing the Rashtrapati Bhavan and the buildings in the Presidential Estate was no easy task. First of all it had to be very impressive as it was the most important building in the new city that the British were building. It was going to be the symbol of the mighty British Raj and had to fill the minds of their Indian subjects with admiration. Lutyens wanted to design a palace more gorgeous than all the beautiful palaces of the Mughals that were scattered across Agra and Delhi.







Finally it had to function as the home and office of the viceroy where the entire personal and official staff of the viceroy and vicereine could be accommodated. A building like that required formal sitting and drawing rooms, private wings, state assembly halls, state dining rooms, ball room, guest suites and of course the luxurious wing where the viceroy and his family could live. Then there was the huge estate where the residential quarters of the staff from the commander-in-chief to the peons had to be accommodated. Outside there were gardens, tennis courts and a golf course to be designed.

*This corridor has beautifully painted ceilings*







*A sofa designed by Lutyens*

Apart from these was required space for many other things – a private press; a tent room that stored the travelling tents of the viceroy when he went on tour; a baggage room for dozens of trunks and bags; linen rooms to store the sheets and towels, the tablecloths and napkins; store rooms; a tailor's room and a workshop for the maintenance of the building. Then to cater to all the requirements of entertaining, which at times meant producing multi-course meals for hundreds of guests, there was the need for a series of kitchens, larders to stock the food items, a cold storage and sculleries for washing the pots, pans, plates, bowls and glasses.

Once the building was ready it had to be furnished and Lutyens designed most of the furniture and even some of the light fittings. Many of the important rooms had walls painted with beautiful murals, and huge carpets were specially woven in Kashmir to fit the floors of large rooms like the ball room and assembly halls. Lutyens used flowing water everywhere to add a sparkle and splash to the building. There are water pools in the Forecourt, and fountains shaped like sea shells, lion's heads, flower petals and even a cobra, that can be seen in the building and garden.







Thousands of Indian labourers, stone carvers, masons and painters were supplied by Indian contractors. The stone carvers came from Agra, Bharatpur and Mirzapur. The labourers were mostly from Rajasthan and Punjab. Up to 2,500 stone cutters and masons worked in giant sheds and 15,000 labourers helped with the work of building. The stone carvers worked in sheds spread over 22 acres and they carved the lions and caparisoned elephants, bells, intricate jaali skylights, fountains and set the mosaic patterns on the floor.

We know the names of the artists who painted the murals on the walls and ceilings and the contractors who supplied the labour but no one remembers the craftsmen who actually did the work, the carvers who sat bent over the pieces of sandstone or marble for months and created magic. Sadly, like in all the palaces and fortresses of India the real creators are not remembered. As historian R.G. Irving writes, 'Barefoot, scantily clad, covered with dust, braving scorching sun and chilling winds, India's peasants built a princely city.'

### *The painted ceiling of the Ashoka Hall*







## OPENING CEREMONIES

The new Viceroy House was inaugurated in February, 1931 by Lord and Lady Irwin. There was a fortnight of ceremonies with glittering banquets, lunches, garden parties, polo matches and balls. At these social occasions the only Indian guests were of course the maharajas and nawabs whose turbans, silk achkans and jewellery stood out among the ball gowns and suits. There was a People's Fete at the Red Fort that was open to the general public.

Then sixteen years later when India became independent, on the morning of 15th August people poured into the Viceroy House and Parliament House and wandered about staring at all they had paid for and could never enjoy. Soon enough, after the Indian President moved into the building now called the Rashtrapati Bhavan, it would once again close its doors to the citizens of India.

*Ceremony at the inauguration of the Viceroy House*





# FORECOURT AND DOME

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We often see the forecourt of the Rashtrapati Bhavan on television news when the president is receiving a head of state. In the background the President's Bodyguard stand in rows to welcome the State guest. The forecourt is a huge expanse built in two shades of red sandstone, a pale cream and a rose red that create the pillared facade of the building. The building has a broad central wing that has all the presidential halls and rooms, with a side wing



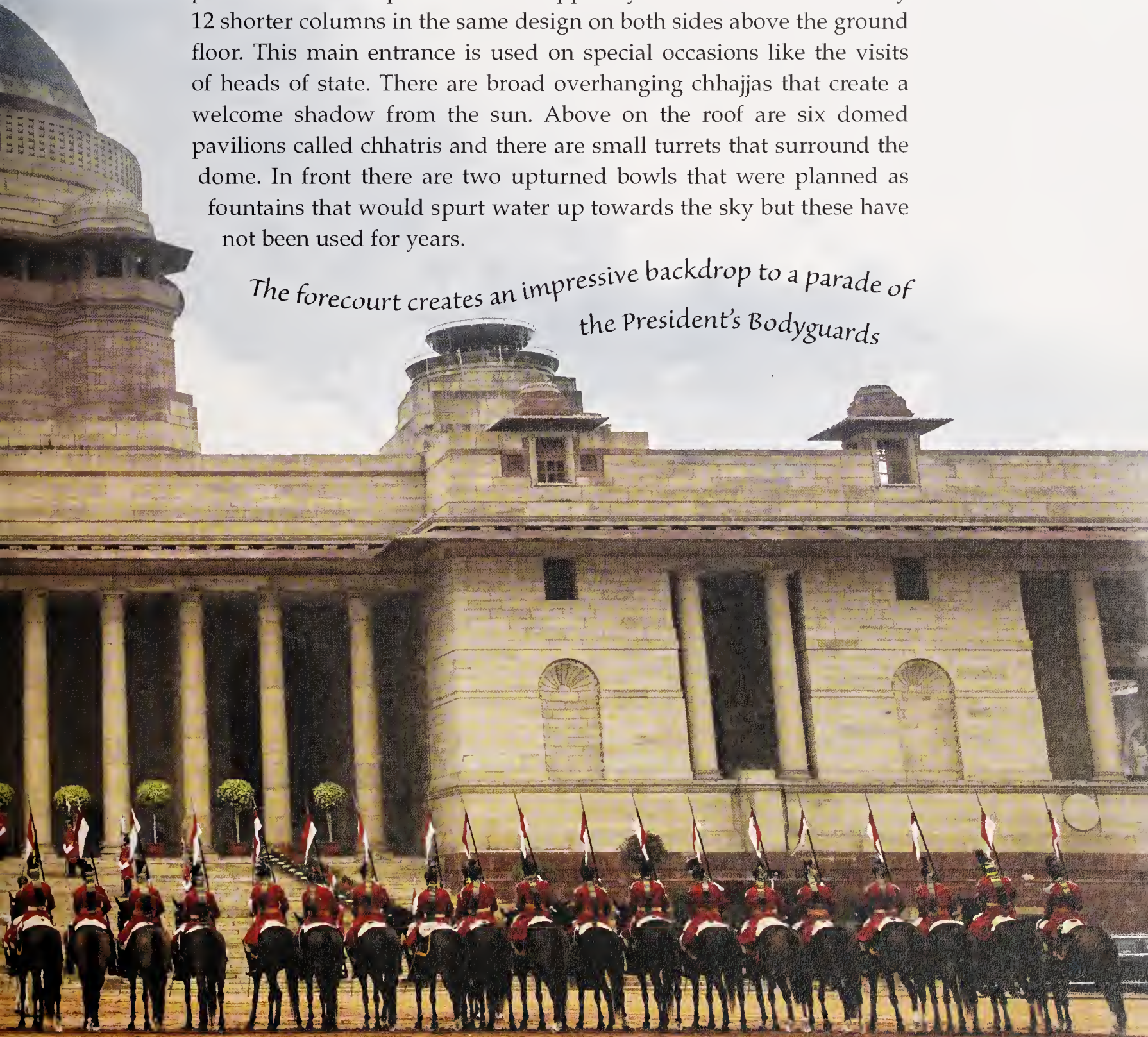




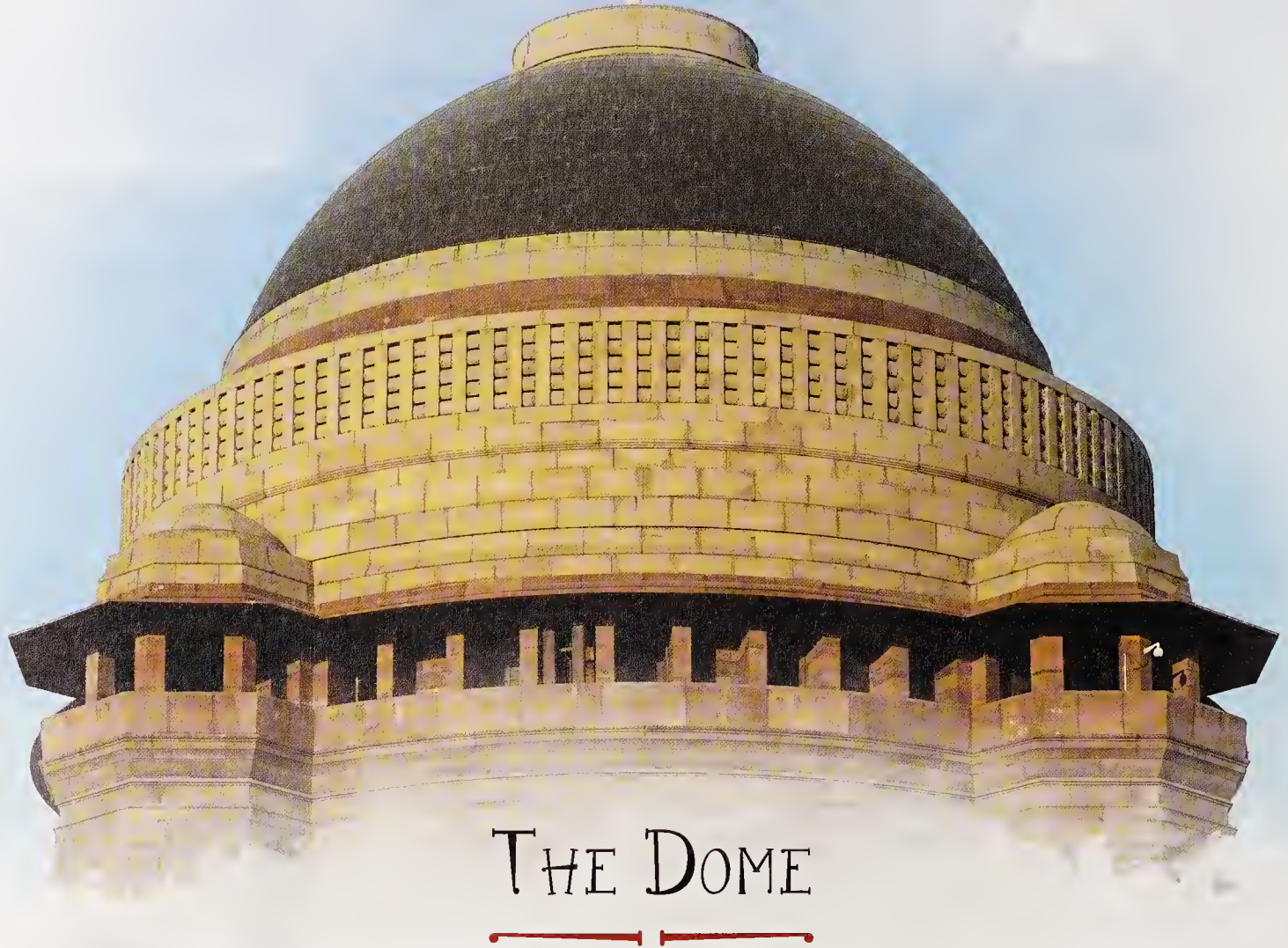
on each side. These side wings have the offices of the presidential and cabinet secretariats. What's interesting is a row of imperial style 'sitting lions', on pedestals along the path from the high wrought-iron gates to the Forecourt.

In the centre of the facade is a sweeping staircase that leads up to the portico with 12 tall pillars that are topped by bells. These are flanked by 12 shorter columns in the same design on both sides above the ground floor. This main entrance is used on special occasions like the visits of heads of state. There are broad overhanging chhajjas that create a welcome shadow from the sun. Above on the roof are six domed pavilions called chhatris and there are small turrets that surround the dome. In front there are two upturned bowls that were planned as fountains that would spurt water up towards the sky but these have not been used for years.

*The forecourt creates an impressive backdrop to a parade of the President's Bodyguards*







**T**he dome and the railing that surrounds it were clearly inspired by the Buddhist stupa at Sanchi, Madhya Pradesh. This stupa, the oldest in the world, was built by Emperor Ashoka of the Mauryan dynasty in the third century BCE. The shape of the dome and the design of the railings are identical to Sanchi. Just below the dome, a round drum raises the height of the dome and it is surrounded by four octagonal kiosks or chhatris, which have a very Rajasthani touch.

Lutyens was keen to make the dome taller than the domes of the secretariat that stands down the hill and were designed by Herbert Baker and so he raised the height by using the drum. This makes it stick out a bit above the roof unlike say the dome of the Taj Mahal that blends smoothly with the building below. Standing in the forecourt if you look up at the dome you can't make this out, but in fact, the height of the dome from the roof is twice the height of the house. It is a fascinating bit of optical illusion.

*The dome was inspired by the Ashokan stupa at Sanchi*





# DURBAR HALL

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*This Buddha image stands in the Durbar Hall*

**T**he Durbar Hall is placed right below the dome and so you enter a circular space with an airy curved roof and a floor decorated in an eye-catching brown and white marble geometric design. It is a circular assembly hall with pillars around it and a huge chandelier hanging in the centre. It hangs from a height of 33 metre and weighs two tons. At the time when the viceroys were staying here the hall was called the Throne Room. It had two huge and elaborate thrones on the raised dais in gold and crimson topped by lions and a crown that was designed by Lutyens. The thrones have been replaced by a simple high-backed chair where the president sits and behind the chair there is now an image of Lord Buddha that was carved in Gandhara in the fifth century CE.

One enters the Durbar Hall from the side of the building even though it stands above the portico stairs and moving up is a broad marble





staircase and then a marble- pillared corridor that is lined by bronze busts of the former presidents who have lived here. The first time the Durbar Hall was used in independent India was in 1948 when the scholar and freedom fighter Chakravarty Rajagopalachari took the oath as the first Indian governor general of the country. If you look at the black and white photograph of this ceremony you can see the two giant thrones behind him. Today important State functions, such as where the president honours select armed personnel or the Padma awardees are held in the Durbar Hall.

*The Durbar Hall has a marble mosaic floor and a beautiful chandelier hanging from the high ceiling*









# ASHOKA HALL

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As you enter the Ashoka Hall bounce on your feet gently and you'll find that the floor has a nice spring to it. That is because this was once a ball room with a wooden floor designed for dancing! In spite of its size the hall is a warm and welcoming space with a rose pink carpet and the glittering chandeliers dripping with crystals that are reflected in large mirrors. The green expanse of lawns and the flower beds of the Mughal Garden are visible through the large French windows.



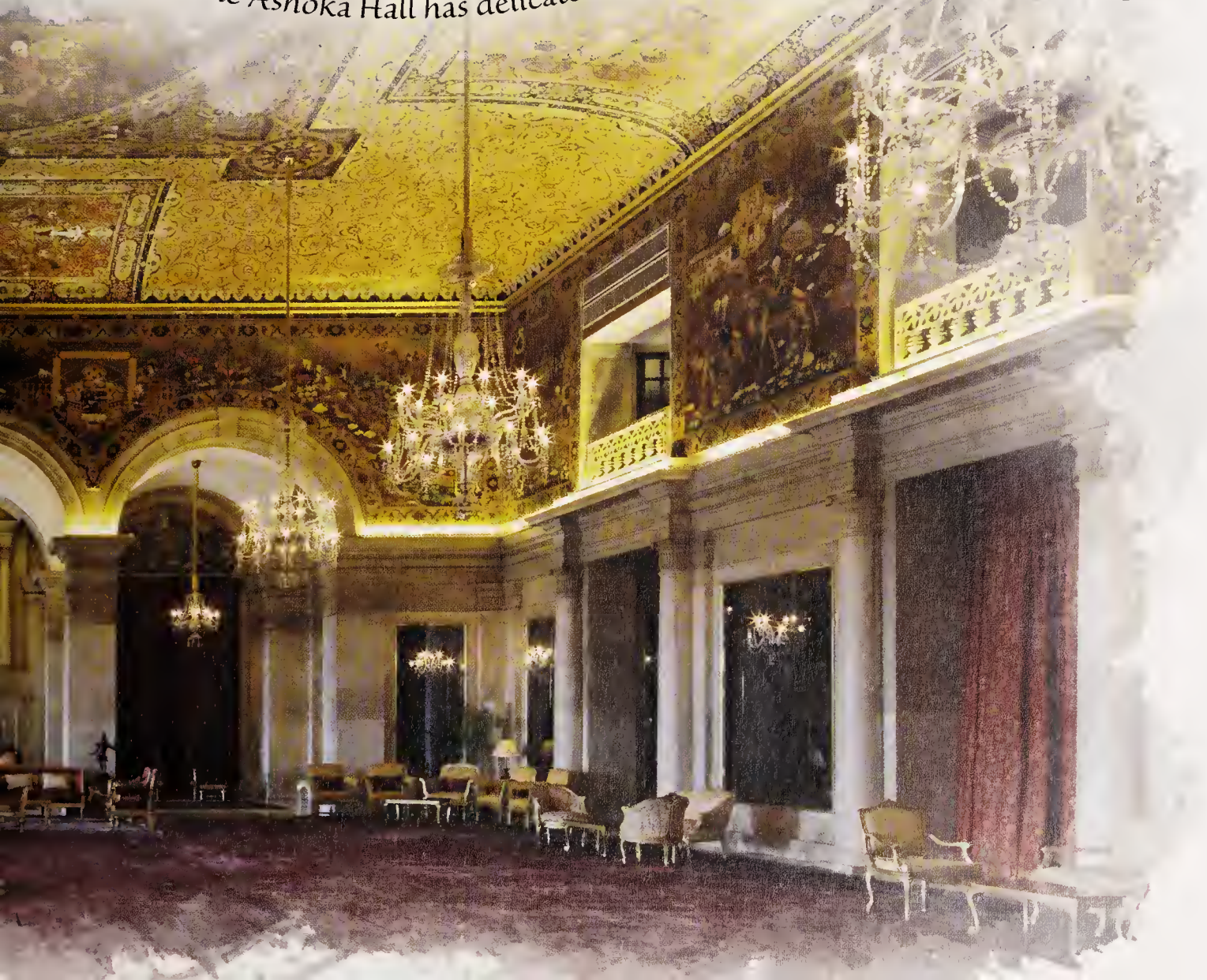




The room has a delicate, feminine feel that is very different from the imperial drama of the other halls. There are colourful frescoes painted on the ceiling and walls and an exquisite carpet on the floor giving it the feel of a jewel box. The huge rose- pink carpet in a subtle Persian design that covers the floor was woven by 500 weavers in Kashmir and it took them two years to complete.

The frescoes on the ceiling and walls depict hunting and courtly scenes and were commissioned by the Vicereine Lady Willingdon. They were a gift of Fath Ali Shah, the Shah of Iran to King George V. The frescoes were painted in a Persian style on leather by an Italian painter Tomasso Colonello who was assisted by 12 Indian artists. For the sides of the room the oil paintings were done on canvas and attached to the walls.

*The Ashoka Hall has delicate frescoes painted on the walls and ceiling*











# BANQUET HALL

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**T**his was the state dining hall that is now known as the Banquet Hall and all formal banquets hosted by the president are held here. Stand at one end of the very, very long dining table surrounded by high-backed chairs and you can barely see the other end. You can imagine the length of the table by the fact that it can seat around 100 guests. At one time the walls had portraits of viceroys staring down at the people at dinner. These have been replaced by portraits of former Presidents of India. The unusual curved clocks, shaped like the musical instrument called lyre, were designed by Lutyens. A bronze image of Mahatma Gandhi created by the sculptor Ram Sutar stands at the head of the table and a row of green lampshades run along the centre of the table. The portraits have been painted by famous Indian artists like K.K. Hebbar, G.R. Santosh, N.S. Subbakrishna and Sanjay Bhattacharya.

*The Banquet Hall is ready for guests of the President*





# YELLOW DRAWING ROOM



*The Yellow Sitting Room hosts smaller gatherings*

Sometimes there are smaller State functions like the swearing-in of government officials or a few ministers and these are held in this smaller reception room. The walls are decorated with a fine collection of oil portraits and landscapes done during the British period, which belong to the 'Company School' of painting of the time of the East India Company. Next to it is the Grey Drawing Room that is used for receptions and for serving refreshments to guests at the various formal occasions.

When going towards this room pause a bit along the way and look up. The round, arched corridor that leads to this drawing room is worth a few moments of study as the ceiling and walls are painted with frescoes and floral patterns interspersed by Sanskrit *shlokas* that were the work of Indian artists. They are a surprising touch of the traditional Indian look in the rather western imperial flow of space at the Rashtrapati Bhavan.







*Heads of State are received by the President in the North Drawing Room*

## NORTH DRAWING ROOM

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**T**he president receives visiting heads of state in this drawing room with the circular grey and white patterned floor. The walls display two interesting paintings that capture important historical moments when India became independent. These paintings are 'Transfer of Power on August 14' by S.N. Ghoshal and 'Swearing-in Ceremony of First Indian Governor General' by Thakur Singh.





# CABINET ROOM

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*The Cabinet Room has the maps of the world painted on the walls*

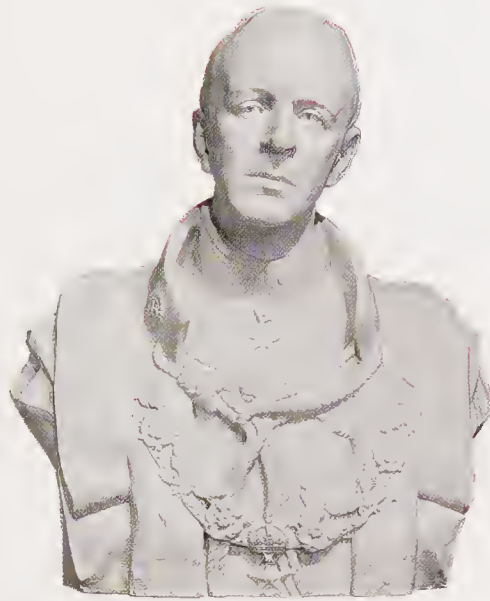
**T**his room with bookcases has murals painted along the walls that show the map of the world and the sea route from Europe to India. It has an important historical past as during the years before 1947 many important decisions about the creation of Pakistan were taken here. Later Sir Cyril Radcliffe worked in a room nearby, drawing the maps to mark out the boundaries between India and Pakistan.





# MUSEUM AND MARBLE HALL

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*Marble bust of the viceroy Lord Chelmsford*

**I**n the museum you can see some beautiful paintings and photographs from the time when the British were ruling our country. The solid silver throne with arms shaped like lions on which George V sat at the 1911 Durbar is also displayed here. There are exquisite landscapes painted by Thomas and William Daniell that will give you an idea of what the country looked like in the eighteenth century. Also on display are the autographed photographs of visiting heads of state and the gifts received by presidents during their visits abroad.

The Marble Hall has a display of all the statues of the British period that were once displayed around the Viceroy House. Right in front there are the statues of King George V and Queen Mary that once stood in the forecourt but were removed when President Rajendra Prasad moved in. Standing before them you'll realise that they are much larger than







life as they are over 7-feet tall and wear high crowns. Also there are life-size statues and busts of viceroys and governor generals and a large painting of a young Queen Victoria.

*A portrait of Queen Victoria, Empress of the Indian Empire*





# JAIPUR COLUMN

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**T**his soaring column, 45-metre high, stands at the entrance of the Forecourt. It is called the Jaipur Column because it was presented by Sawai Madho Singh, the King of Jaipur. This has at times made people think mistakenly that the Jaipur royal family owned the Raisina Hill where the building came up. In fact the area was originally owned by the royal family of Jodhpur. Designed by Lutyens the column has a six point glass star perched on a bronze lotus that is held up by a sandstone egg. At one time a statue of the Viceroy Lord Hardinge stood at the foot of the column but now it has been shifted to the Coronation Park in Nirankari Colony near Guru Tegh Bahadur Nagar, what was once called King's Way Camp.

*The Jaipur Column is topped by  
a six point glass star*





# FASCINATING Facts

1 British New Delhi had many statues of kings, queens and viceroys scattered among its buildings. Most of them were shifted to the Coronation Park in King's Way Camp that was the site of the Durbar of 1911. It includes the statue of King George V that stood under the canopy facing India Gate. Today the canopy stands empty.

2 One of the prominent statues from the British period displayed inside Rashtrapati Bhavan is a bust of Lutyens that watches over an open courtyard.

3 An exhibition of Indian art was held in London in 1947 and when the exhibits came back they were kept in Rashtrapati Bhavan till shifted to the National Museum on Janpath.

4 At the suggestion of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru two items – the fifth century CE Gandhara Buddha displayed in the Durbar Hall and the third century BCE Ashokan bull standing among the pillars in the forecourt remained there.



5  
Some Indian architectural terms for designs that you will see in the building:

**Chhajjas**: stone slabs that stick out just below the roof as protection against the sun and rain.

**Chhatris** : the small domed pavilions placed along the roofline.

**Jaalis** : stone screens carved with delicate perforated designs used on windows and skylights.

6  
Lutyens built a mansion with a dome to symbolise the British Empire but in medieval India, except for mosques, the only buildings that were built with domes were mausoleums built over graves, like Humayun's Tomb.

7  
During British times the dining hall and kitchen employed dozens of people with Indian titles like the khansama (chef), masalchi (helper) and abdar (bar man). The chefs were called 'English' cooks because they knew how to cook European cuisine but they were often Baruas from East Bengal.

8  
Here are some interesting numbers that were given in a report in the newspaper Daily Telegraph of London in December 1928 – the Viceroy House has one and half miles of passages, 340 rooms, 227 columns, 35 loggias, 37 fountains, 14 lifts and 330 acres of gardens. No one seems to have counted the pigeons!



# This Is Ours Now...



‘Uff! We have been walking for hours!’

‘Where are we going Abbu?’

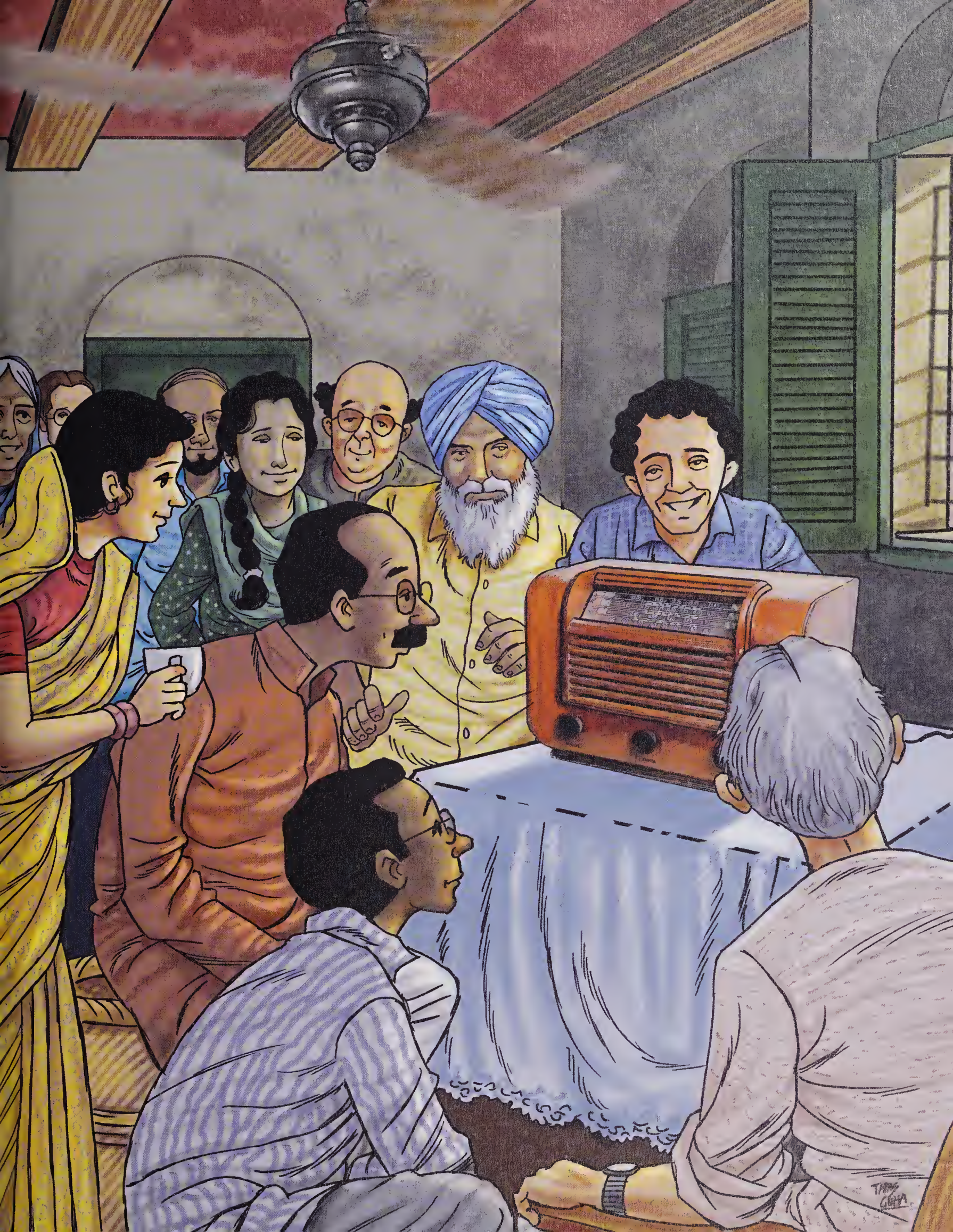
‘It is so hot!’

Fazal Ali looked at the curious faces of his wife and two children and grinned, ‘It’s a secret.’

‘Why?’ his ten-year old daughter Kulsum raised her eyebrows and widened her eyes. One of her favourite questions was ‘why?’











‘It’s a special treat for today.’

Twelve-year old Salim nodded sagely, ‘Something to do with what’s happening today Abbu?’

‘Very clever of you! It’s everything to do with what’s happening today.’

That morning Fazal had woken Salim and Kulsum at dawn, smiled softly at their sleepy faces and asked, ‘Azaad Hindustan kaisa lag raha hai?’

He had never imagined that a day would come when he would ask such a question, ‘How does it feel to live in free Hindustan?’

It really was a very, very special day – it was 15th August 1947. A date he would never forget.

The night before, at the midnight hour, many people in their lane, the *mohalla* of Gali Qasim Jaan in Chandni Chowk, had gathered around the radio of Pandit Chatur Prasad who was the principal of a school. He was the only one in their locality who owned a radio. The radio was a small rectangular box with a row of dials and a screen. He had turned the arrow in the screen to All India Radio at 11.45 pm and turned up the volume to the maximum so that everyone could hear. Then they had listened with bated breath as Jawaharlal Nehru had taken the oath as the first Prime Minister of independent India.

Things had not been easy in Chandni Chowk in the last few months. A sort of quiet panic had taken over the Muslim families when it was announced that Hindustan was to be partitioned into two countries – India and Pakistan. No one knew what they should do. Many of their neighbours were wondering if they should pack and leave and try their luck in the new country.







One day Fazal Ali's wife Farzana had asked him what they should plan to do.

'Are we going to Pakistan then?' she asked a little nervously as she wandered about the workshop where Fazal was at work on a small stone box, carving the top in a delicate design of leaves and flowers.

Fazal stopped tapping the hammer on the chisel, raised his head and said shortly, 'Of course not!'

'Raunaq Chacha is leaving, Shehnaaz Begum has already finished packing ... Parveen said...'

'Go to Pakistan and do what? Will they have work for a stone carver like me? And begum, Hindustan is my home ... we came to Agra to work on the Taj and then to Dilli for the angrez...'

'I know ... I know...' Farzana muttered and wandered away. She had heard the story so many times she did not have the time to listen to it again. The buffaloes had to be milked, vegetables had to be bought, lunch had to be cooked...

**I**t was a story that Fazal Ali loved to tell and his children loved to listening to, wide eyed with wonder.

'A long, long time ago, during the reign of the Mughal emperor Shahjahan two brothers came to Agra from the city of Ahmedabad in Gujarat. They were famous sangtarash, traditional carvers of stone and they came to work at the wonderful marble mausoleum that the badshah was building in the memory of his dead queen Mumtaz Mahal.'

And little Kulsum would wriggle in delight and exclaim, 'The Taj Mahal!'





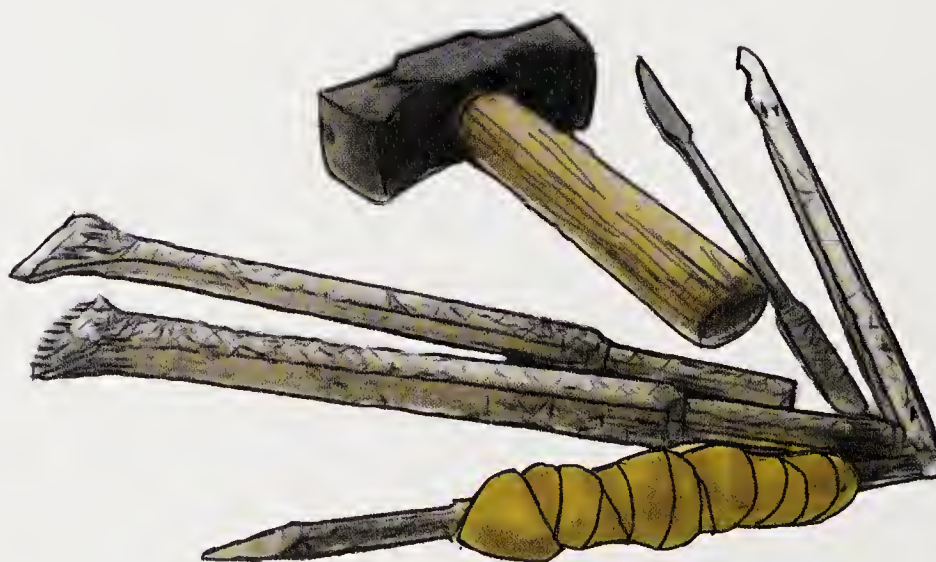


After the Taj Mahal was built the brothers never went back to Ahmedabad. So Fazal came from an illustrious family of stone carvers who worked on the Taj Mahal and then settled nearby in the Agra locality called Taj Gunj, where many sangtarash families had begun to live. They opened a shop near the entrance of the Taj Mahal where they sold marble boxes, plates and bowls inlaid with stones, jewellery and tiny replicas of the mausoleum.

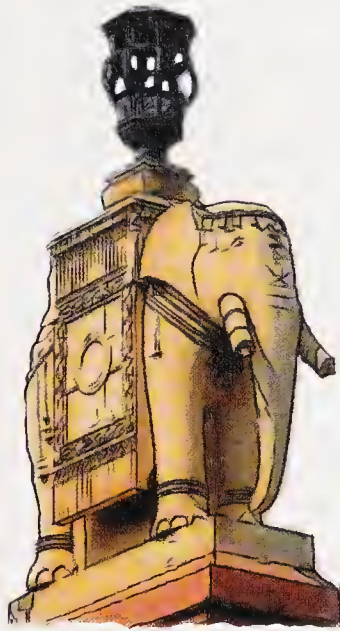
Then around thirty years ago their lives changed again. At that time Fazal was around ten years old. One day some important looking men arrived in a car from Delhi saying that they were looking for stone carvers to work at the new city that was being built there by the British government.

The men of Taj Gunj had gathered around to listen and someone exclaimed in surprise, 'A whole new city?'

The contractor from Delhi, a man called Haroun al Rashid nodded, 'I am supplying workers for a big building they want to build on top of a







hill where the viceroy will live. So I need some experienced sangtarash like you who can work with both sandstone and marble.'

The money was good and the chance to work on a building was very exciting. So Fazal's father decided to come to Delhi while his brother managed the Agra shop. That is how Fazal came to Delhi where his father worked in a huge workshop carving large blocks of sandstone. Fazal would visit him and watch him carve decorations on grills, windows and pillars, bent over the stone, the chips flying around his head as he tapped gently with his hammer and chisel creating the delicate lace like squares called jaalis.

The huge mansion was to be called Viceroy House and when it was ready after eighteen years, Fazal's father decided not to go back to Agra. He had made many friends in Delhi and so he bought a small house in Chandni Chowk. There was a lot of work for him and Fazal as they needed stone carver of the many buildings coming up in the new city. Soon he had also opened a small shop in the front room of their house in Gali Qasim Jaan. Now Fazal and his family lived there.





So on the morning of 15th August, the first day of a new India, Fazal and his family prepared for an outing. After breakfast they went out to the main road and caught a tonga and headed for India Gate. The horse clip clopped along the road before the Red Fort and then through the avenue called Faiz Bazaar that was lined with shops. Then the road curved around Delhi Gate and neared the ruins of Ferozshah Kotla. That was when they began to notice how the road was becoming crowded. There were so many tongas, cycle rickshaws, bullock carts and also hundreds of people walking along all around them.

Farzana looked around feeling quite amazed, it was like a festival! It felt like all of Delhi was out on the streets and heading towards India Gate in an impulsive act of celebration. It was hot and humid but every face had a smile and everyone's eyes shone with happiness.

No one had ever dreamed that such a day would ever come, that they would be the citizens of a free country. So it was the best festival of all.

Near the circle around India Gate the tongawalla pulled at the horse's reins and the tonga came to a stop. The road was too crowded, he said,







he couldn't take them any further and that was when they began to walk along the road called King's Way. Leaving the arch of the India Gate behind them, past the spurting fountains on the green lawns, they trudged on towards a row of sandstone buildings on a hill, visible in the distance.

Fazal pointed to a dark grey dome that floated on top of the hill and said, 'That's where we are going.'

Farzana stopped in her tracks and stared at him, 'But that's the Viceroy House! We can't go there?'

'The angrez are gone,' Fazal laughed, 'we can!'

'Are you sure?' Farzana said doubtfully. 'Won't the policemen and the soldiers stop us?'

'May be... Let's see...'

It looked like everyone was going to Viceroy House. By the time they reached the bottom of Raisina Hill the crowd had become a sea of people all heading towards the buildings that were a symbol of British rule in India – the two secretariat buildings that flanked the road called North and South Block and behind them the pillared and domed mansion of Viceroy House.

Many other people were trudging up the hill with them. It was as if the citizens of India were going to claim what belonged to them. They were free and this was their motherland.

'So we'll see the Viceroy House?' Kulsum wanted to know.

'We'll see more.' Fazal smiled. 'I want to see the pieces my father carved that were used there.'







'Oh!' Salim frowned, 'But how will you find them? Will you be able to recognise them? Do you know where they were placed?'

'I can try. My Abbu was one of the best sangtarash and he worked on these jaalis that were specially designed by Lutyens Saheb.'

'Lut ... who?'

'Lutyens. He was the angrez who designed this palace and he even drew the designs for some of the jaalis. There was one I remember that Abbu made that was to be placed above a door. It was in dark red sandstone ... it took him months to carve because the design was so delicate and difficult. Lutyens Saheb used to come to check how the work was going.'

'So you met this saheb?'

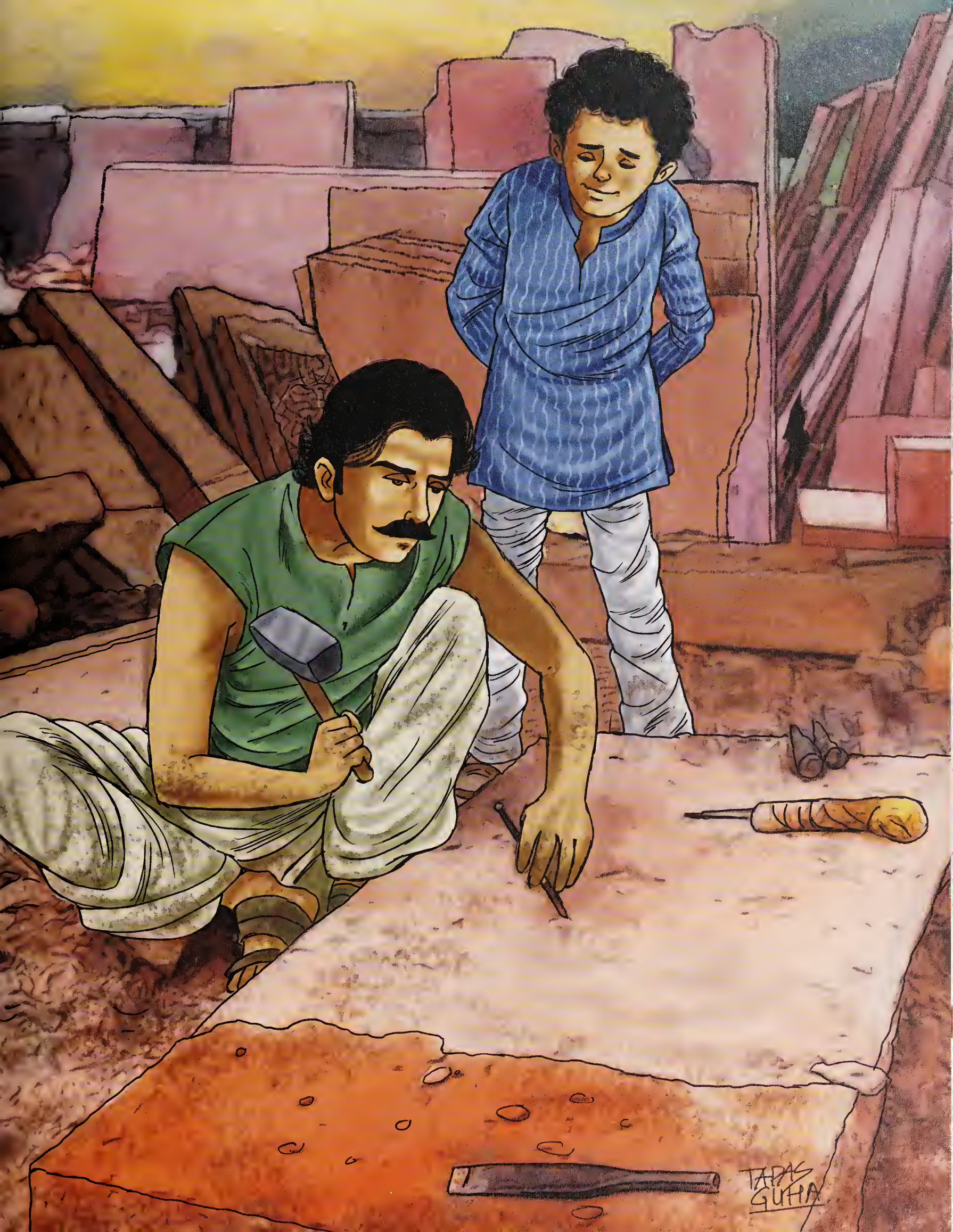
Fazal shook his head, 'Nah! Abbu told me about it. I wasn't allowed in the work shed. Sometimes I would sneak in with Abbu early in the morning and wander around a bit but I had to leave before the supervisors arrived. So I did see what he was working on and I've never forgotten that design...'

Fazal had learnt to carve from his father. How you treated the stone like a living thing and you drew out the design very, very carefully from inside it. You placed the slab of stone flat on the ground and you tapped softly and slowly because you did not want the stone to crack. Then once the pattern had been carved, you patiently polished it with sandpaper until it began to glow like silk.

Fazal used to think that stones spoke to his father and he knew their character. Over the centuries, sangtarash like him had created not just pillars and balconies but palaces, fortresses, mosques and temples that would stand for centuries. They were called sangtarash and silavat, the stone carvers, and also shilpi because they were artists and they created art in enduring stone.











By then they were going up the slope of Raisina Hill, looking around wide eyed at the magnificent secretariat buildings on both sides with domes and pillars, high-arched entrances and verandas. Along the side of the road were rows of pillars topped by stone ships that delighted the children. Right in front were high iron gates painted black in a lovely wrought-iron design.

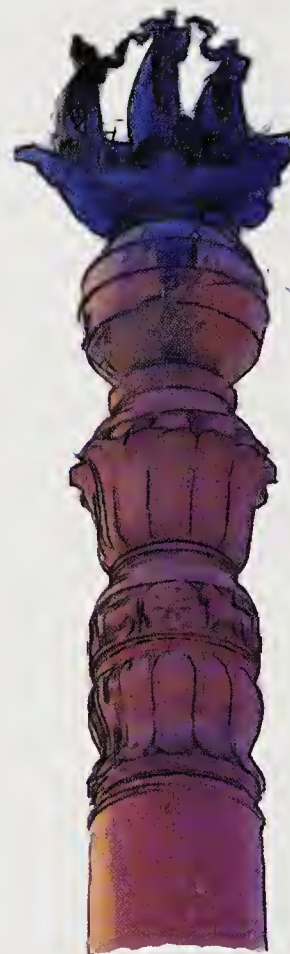
By now the crowd had grown and they were being pushed and jostled from all sides. Fazal wondered anxiously if he would be able to find his father's jaalis in this noisy chaos. He had not admitted to his family but he had no idea where that jaali doorway could be found in this huge building.

Farzana turned to him, 'This is such a big building. How will we find it? Do you remember where that door is?'

Fazal shook his head, 'Abbu just said that it was for the top of a door.' Then he stood still, looked around the expanse of the forecourt before the pillared porch and said, 'Where are the trains?'

Salim's eyes brightened, 'Trains? Trains came here?'

'They used to, there were rail tracks running up and down the hill and the trains carried up the building supplies. Huge slabs of stone - marbles in many colours, sandstone, granite ... also sand, cement, wood, iron... All the things you needed to build the palace.'





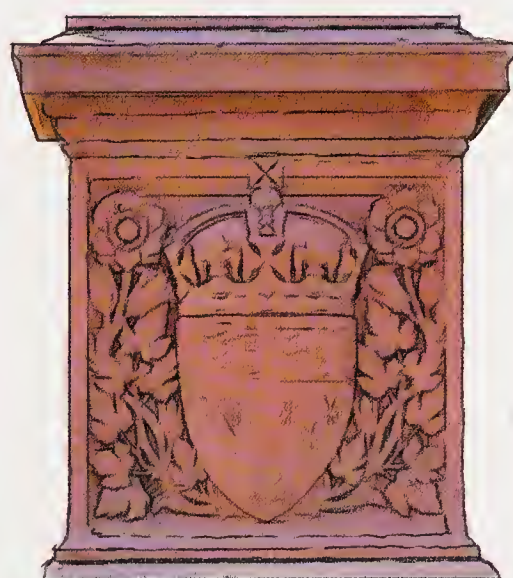


Looking around, Kulsum breathed dreamily, 'Oh what a wonderful palace! Imagine living here!'

They were standing in an open space before the front of Viceroy House with the row of pillars and the broad flight of staircase in the middle. Then Salim jumped with excitement and pointed towards the sky. On top of the building was the round steel grey dome and above it, on a high flagstaff there was a flag in stripes of saffron, white and green fluttering in triumph. It was the flag of India in place of the red, blue and white Union Jack that had flown there.

They climbed the stairs, went past the pillars and entered a huge circular hall and the echoing room was full of people wandering around, staring wide eyed at the two giant gold and crimson thrones placed under the canopy, the marble pillars and the glittering chandelier hanging from the ceiling.

They wandered around the marble hallways, staring at portraits of viceroys and their wives, past pillared corridors and up and down staircases that were bigger than any they had ever seen. Most of the







rooms were locked so they peered in through the glass panes of the doors and saw sitting rooms, with paintings on the walls, furnished with luxurious silks and glowing carpets on the floor. The mood was one of celebration and even the policemen who were hurrying them along were smiling.

There were doors everywhere, big and small, but nowhere was there a doorway topped by a carved stone jaali screen. They did spot many screens used on windows and skylights and the children would point and ask excitedly, 'Abbu that one?' and Fazal would shake his head.

The children knew what a jaali was because they had seen their father work on them. They were slabs of stone carved in a lacelike design that were fitted on windows and verandas so that they let in the sunlight making lovely light and shadows on the floor and walls of a room.

Kulsum touched a marble pillar, the stone smooth and cool under her fingers and raised her eyes to look up at a row of bells carved on top.

'So all these were carved by Hindustanis?'

'Of course! This palace was built by Indians, every floor, ceiling, pillar ... the team of sangtarash worked for eighteen years. There were hundreds of them working through the hot and dusty loo winds of summer and the icy chill and fog of winter. They were helped by labourers who were very poor and many had come from villages in Rajasthan and Punjab...'

'Who remembers them?' His wife Farzana said softly, 'They were the real creators but people will only talk of Lutyens and the king and viceroy and say that they built all this.'

'That is why I wanted to remember Abbu today. He used to dream of Hindustan becoming free one day but he did not live to see it.'







Suddenly Kulsum stopped and said anxiously, 'Ammi where is Bhaiya?'

They looked around. Salim had vanished.

In growing panic they pushed past the people crowding around them, frantically searching and calling his name. Farzana was clutching on to Kulsum's hand as Fazal called desperately, 'Salim! Salim!' thinking worriedly, how will we find him in this crowd? What will I do if he is lost?

By then they were in an open courtyard and Farzana stopped and said, 'Let's wait here. He'll find us.'

'Well he'd better come back fast.' Fazal said worriedly. 'The policemen are now making people leave...'

Just then, as if by magic, Salim was before them, his face wreathed in a huge smile, 'Abbu I found a doorway with a jaali on top!'







A minute later Fazal, Farzana, Salim and Kulsum stood in front of a doorway, staring up in amazement.

It was an entrance like most of the others with two doors with rows of wooden slats. What made it different was that on top, curving down like a curtain was this delicately carved piece of stone as fragile as woven lace. On it were carved so many beautiful patterns, small flowers and curving leaves, squares and circles.

Farzana, Salim and Kulsum had seen many jaalis before but they all knew that this one was special. They stared at it in silence, finding it utterly amazing that anyone could have created it by hand. The jaali was so delicate it was hard to believe that once it was a hard slab of stone that had been transformed under the patient hands of a sangtarash into a piece of art.

Fazal stood there, a slight smile curving his lips, his eyes bright with tears, 'Yes. This is the one; my Abbu's jaali doorway. It took him months to carve and he was so very proud of it.'

Farzana said thoughtfully, 'His name should have been carved on it too, saying that it was made by Nazir Ahmed. Sangtarash.'

'The best in Hindustan,' Fazal breathed softly. 'A true artist. My Abbu.'







TAPAS GUHA









# THE MUGHAL GARDEN



## A LITTLE BIT OF PARADISE



**A**fter wandering inside Rashtrapati Bhavan, through corridors with marble pillars and assembly halls with glittering chandeliers, let's now enter a world of blooming roses and drooping bougainvillea, a water pool that welcomes the vivid flutter of butterflies, feel the magic of a dancing peacock on a patch of emerald grass and the playfulness of flowing fountains.

The solemn facade of the Rashtrapati Bhavan hides a very beautiful secret - a garden at the back that is like paradise come down to earth. At the famous Mughal Garden we enter the world of nature at its most beautiful.





# WHAT KIND OF A GARDEN?

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A viceregal palace needed a garden, not just for formal occasions like garden parties and receptions but also as a place where the residents of the building could relax. The Vicereine Lady Hardinge insisted that before he began to design the garden, Edwin Lutyens should first see the gardens that the Mughals had laid out all across their empire. She was very keen on the gardens of Srinagar in Kashmir that were created by Emperor Jahangir and his queen Nurjahan. So Lutyens went on a trip around north India to study the gardens of Agra and Srinagar and also referred to Persian and Mughal miniature paintings.

The traditional Mughal garden was inspired by the royal gardens of Persia and is designed as a portrait of paradise, with large shady trees, flower beds, open pillared pavilions, channels of flowing water and







fountains. It is a design called charbagh and we can see the charbagh in the gardens of the Humayun's Tomb and the Hayat Baksh garden inside the Red Fort in Delhi, the Taj Mahal in Agra and the Shalimar Bagh and Nishat Bagh in Srinagar.

Unlike the Hindu and Buddhist gardens of ancient times that were often orchards and had bushes and flowers growing in wild abandon, the Mughal garden is landscaped with geometric precision, divided into four segments by channels of flowing water, thus creating the charbagh or four gardens.

Often in these gardens the water flows down from a height along marble channels designed with a fish-scale pattern and the channel is called Nahar-i-Bihisht, the stream of paradise. In the middle of the garden is a marble pavilion, called chabutra that is open from all sides, with carved pillars, where the king and his family would often sit and enjoy the evening breeze. At Shahjahan's Hayat Baksh garden in the Red Fort the chabutra had water gently rippling down a marble chute where as dusk fell over the city, lighted candles were placed behind the water to create a flickering dance of light and shadows.

*A panoramic view of the Mughal Garden during a formal reception*



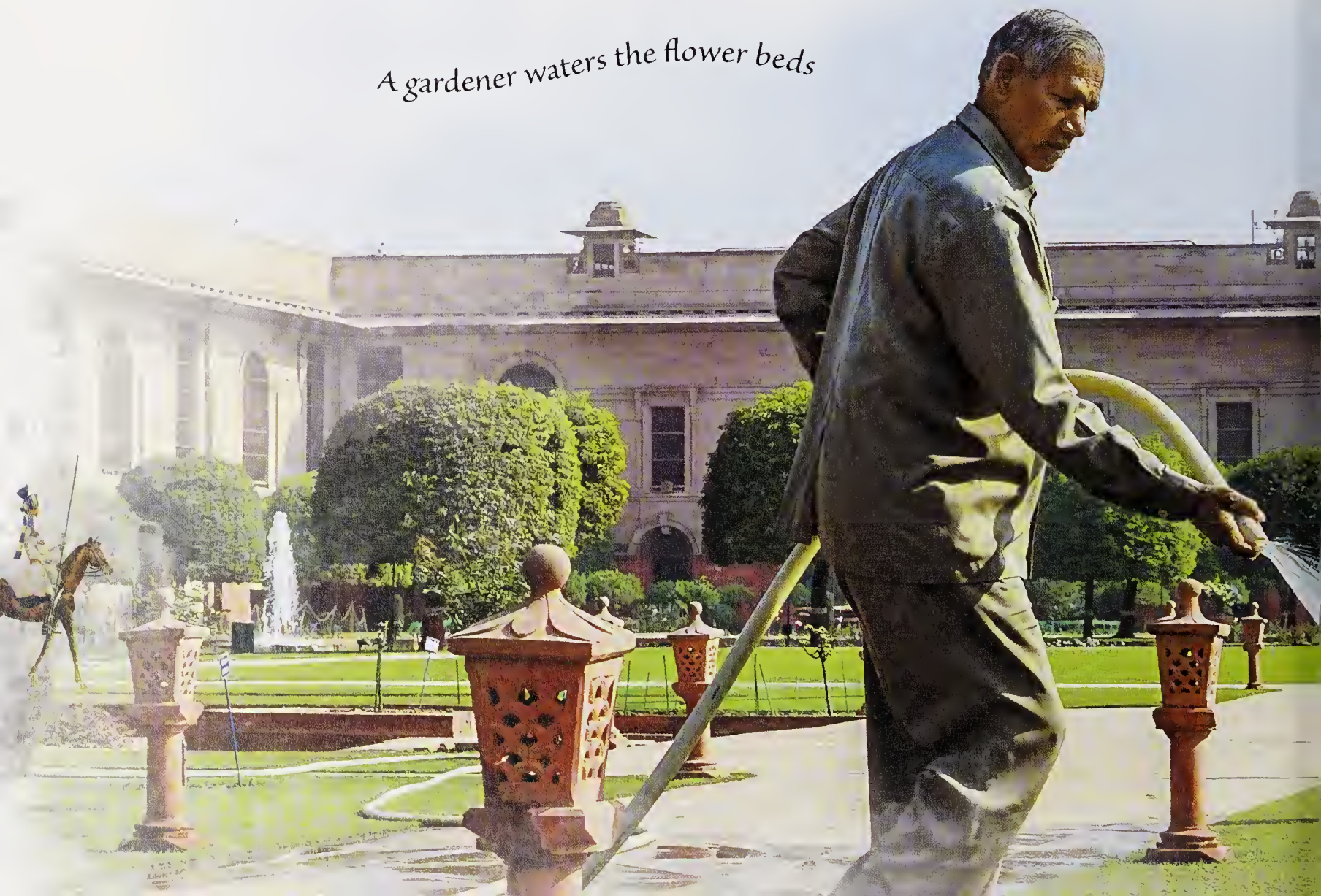




At the Rashtrapati Bhavan, Lutyens designed the garden in a blend of Mughal and English design. Before he came to India, Lutyens was famous at home as the builder of garden houses with the horticulturist and landscape artist Gertrude Jekyll. He was not interested in horticulture and would design the gardens but leave the actual selection of the flowers, trees and plants to Jekyll. In India the horticulturist who actually laid out the Mughal Garden was William Robertson Mustoe. The garden could only be built after the Viceregal Palace had been completed, so in 1931, Mustoe and Lutyens had to race against time to have the flowers in bloom when Lord and Lady Irwin moved in.

At the Rashtrapati Bhavan, Edwin Lutyens drew the lines of the Mughal Garden, placed the pools, cascades and fountains and then William Mustoe filled in the colours with flowers, trees, hedges and grass. What they created is the most beautiful part of the building.

*A gardener waters the flower beds*





# A GARDEN PARADISE

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So Mustoe got to work with an army of gardeners, the malis, and they had a big job to do. Raisina Hill was a dry stony patch of land with just scrubs growing on it. The land had to be made fertile and so earth was lugged up by the wagon load on the train that ran up the hill. Also, the climate of Delhi made the work of creating and maintaining a garden even harder. There was the fierce heat of summer with months of dry and dusty winds when every plant would droop and die. Then the foggy chill and frost of winter made the petals fall off the roses. Delhi was not kind to delicate plants and flowers.







The garden that stands at the back of the Rashtrapati Bhavan covers a huge 6 hectares or 15 acres of land beginning from the western loggia. The garden is a giant rectangle measuring 200 x 175 metre with two parallel channels of water running north to south bisected by two channels running east to west. This creates the square landscaped patches of flower beds, hedges and lawns that are typical of the charbagh design.

At the spots where these water channels meet are set pretty red sandstone fountains shaped like layers of circular flower petals. There are two rows of six fountains down the central vista bringing the joyous sparkle of flowing water into the garden. The fountain water spurts out from the centre of the petals up to a height of 12 feet and then splashes down gently on the flowers and flows down into the pool below. At times, on sparkly sunny days, the glittering waters capture a fleeting rainbow in its flow.

Lutyens always enjoyed using water as a part of his architectural design, as can be seen in the many designs of fountains all across Rajpath. So there are channels, stepped pools and even a waterfall. There are smaller gardens attached to the main one like the Purdah Garden which is like the secluded purdah baghs that the Mughals built for the ladies. This Purdah Garden has a 12-foot wall around it on which peacocks dance. Also, instead of a pavilion in the middle of the main garden like the Mughals had, there is a large lawn where tents were put up for formal entertainments.

Lutyens added garden architecture and design that were used in typical English gardens like the water flowing down cascades and shrubs being clipped into ornamental shape that is called topiary. There are two small garden houses called gazebos and arched structures called pergolas over which climbing plants grow creating a corridor of green leaves.







On either side of the main garden are laid out the Terrace Gardens with a fountain in the centre. The Terrace Gardens are planted with fragrant rose varieties and China Oranges.

The most delightful part of Lutyens' creation is the garden at the end with a sunken circular pool in the centre. It is Lutyens' Butterfly Garden that you reach through a small gate and then walk down a flight of steps to the edge of a round pool. It has flower beds banked on all sides and butterflies flicker about everywhere. The air is redolent with the perfume of roses, jasmines and verbenas and it is truly a very private paradise.

*The delightful Butterfly Garden with the circular lotus pool*







## TREES, FLOWERS AND GRASS

**M**ustoe had to decide what to plant and he selected a mix of Indian and English varieties. The flowers were to be planted in low beds in a mix of colours and heights, 'to create a pyramid of colours'. Among the flowers he chose were dahlia, poppy, larkspur, verbena,

*Trees, lawns, flower beds, water channels and fountains  
create a picturesque view*







chrysanthemum, sweet pea, petunia, daisy, marigold, carnation and even daffodils and sunflowers. Today there are nearly 250 varieties of roses making this one of the largest selection in the world.

When it came to trees, shrubs and creepers Mustoe preferred to plant Indian varieties, many of them evergreens like maulsari, putranjiva roxburghi, cypress, Thuja orientalis and China orange trees. The maulsari or bakul were planted along the lawns and water channels and are pruned into a pretty mushroom shape that gives a touch of elegance to the lawns. Cypressess line the pavements while the putranjiva is planted along the two gazebos.

There are shrubs and creepers planted along the terrace walls like raat ki rani that blooms at night, the fragrant mogra, motiya, juhi and gardenia. Also among the creepers are climbing roses and rows of bougainvillea in various shades that bloom in the summers and add a touch of colour to the garden during the hot days when other flowers are absent.

Mustoe even chose a special grass for the lawns. This was the doob grass that was brought from Belvedere House in Calcutta. This was a tough variety that would grow well in the harsh climate of Delhi. The doob has to be removed in summer, a new top soil has to be laid and then after the rains the grass sprouts again.

The shade of green trees, flower beds that are always a riot of colours, the carpet of green lawns and the water channels and fountains make the Mughal Garden at the Rashtrapati Bhavan truly an image of paradise.













# FASCINATING Facts

1 The Mughal Gardens are opened to the public in February and March every year and 6,58,765 people visited the garden in the year 2016.

2 In spite of his talent at designing gardens, Lutyens was not interested in gardening and never had a garden of his own.

3 The horticulturist William Mustoe who laid out the garden was trained at the famous Kew Gardens of London and worked at Rashtrapati Bhavan from 1919 to 1931. When Lutyens visited India in winter, he and Mustoe would breakfast together every morning.

4 We have to thank Mustoe for giving us the green forested Ridge in Delhi. In 1915 the Ridge had no trees, just scrubs and Mustoe forested it with the South American tree called mesquite that we call vilaiti keekar.

5 The petals of the fountains are not inspired by lotus leaves but the giant leaves of the water lily called Victoria Amazonica from South America. Here they are made of red sandstone. The maharaja of Jaipur had them copied in marble for his Rambagh Palace.

6 During British times the garden had a staff of 418 gardeners with 50 boys who scared off the birds.



7 There is also a 16 acre Utilities Garden where vegetables and fruits are grown.

8 Mustoe calculated that there were 17 miles of hedges that had to be trimmed by the gardeners.

9 The ducks and other birds are fed in the Biodiversity park which is adjacent to Mughal Garden

10 Along with peacocks, many birds like lapwings, parrots, mynahs, pigeons and doves visit the garden and the spotbill ducks float on the water channels.

11 Among the varieties of roses, one is nearly black in colour and another, a rare green. There are roses named after Mother Teresa, Jawaharlal Nehru and Queen Elizabeth.

12 There are six tennis courts along the sides of the pergola and the surrounding walls have a circular design that is said to be a copy of the round owl like glasses that Lutyen wore.

13 The Mughal family created many gardens in Delhi like Shahjahan's Tis Hazari; his daughters Jahanara and Roshanara's Sahibabad and Roshanara Bagh respectively and Shahjahan's wife Akbarabadi Begum's Shalimar Bagh. Later, the wife of Mughal emperor Mohammad Shah Rangeela, Qudsia Begum, created the Qudsia Bagh. Today many of the gardens have vanished or are in a very bad condition.





# The Friendship Bird



Sitting in the shade of a peepal tree Dhani bent his head over his school homework and sighed. There were four more arithmetic sums to be done.

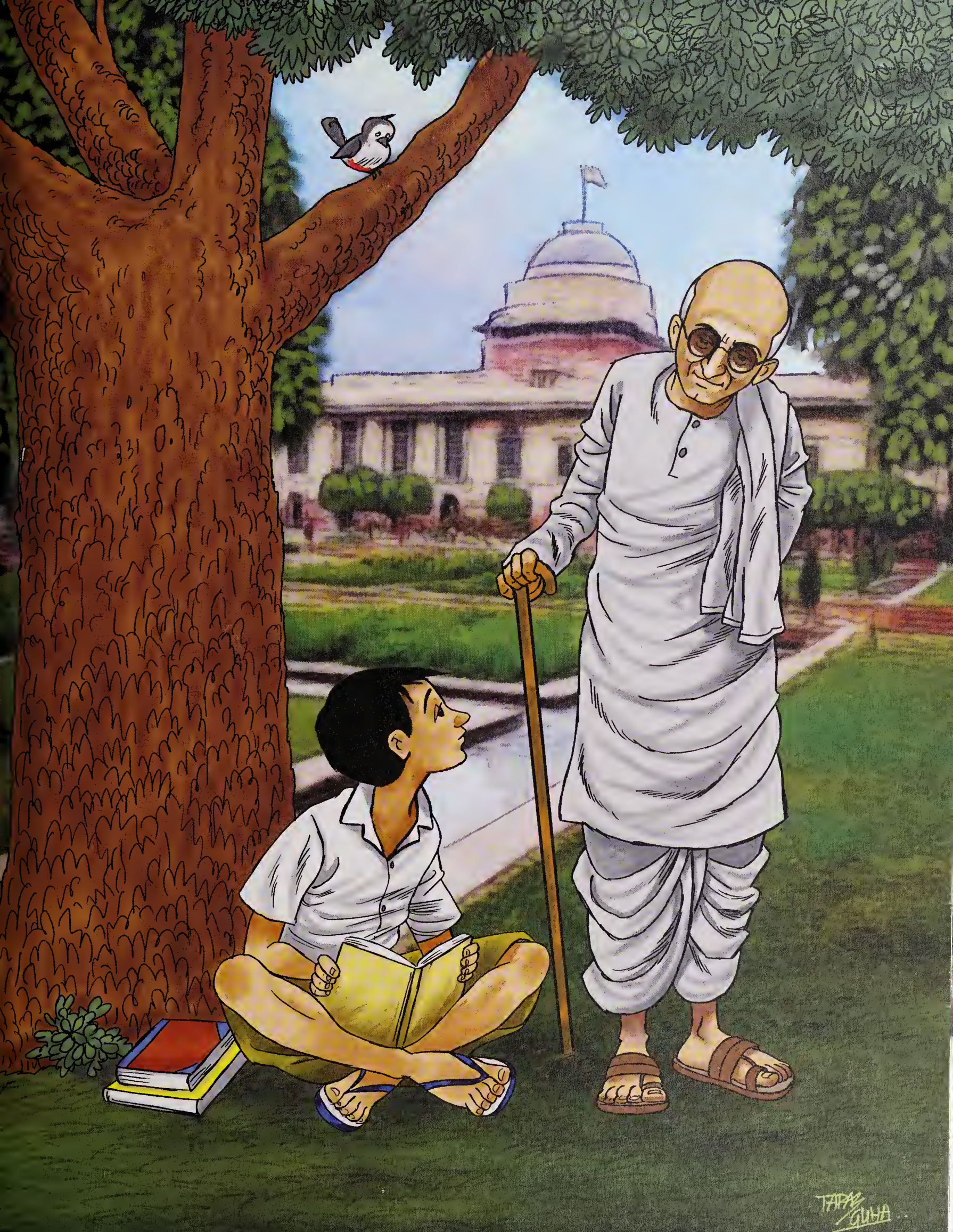
Four more! Really, was that fair?

Who started this horrible thing called homework? he wondered. Wasn't school and class tests bad enough? They had to ruin the lives of thousands of children by giving them more work to do at home?

Then a quiet, gentle voice spoke above him, 'That's a sad little face. What is it? Maths homework?'











Dhani looked up to see a short, thin man with a bald head, clad in a plain white dhoti and kurta staring down at him with a sympathetic smile. Dhani thought the man was quite old and he wore these round framed dark glasses perched on a long beaky nose. He carried a walking stick and seemed to be out on a morning walk.

Dhani nodded grimly.

'Multiplications or divisions?'

'Multiplications...' Dhani gave a tired sigh.

The man bent and took a closer look at his notebook and said, '48 multiplied by 2 is 96 not 117.' Then a small smile curved around the thin lips. '117! How did you come up with that number?'

Dhani stared up at the man in amazement, 'You just looked at the sum and you knew the answer? How did you do that?'

The man tapped his forehead, 'I used my head.'

'I'm using my head too!' Dhani protested, 'And nothing comes out!'

'You do know the multiplication tables don't you?'

'Ummm ... sort of...' Dhani mumbled reluctantly.

By then the man was perched next to him on a patch of broken wall, 'So what's your name child? How old are you?'

'I'm Dhani and I'm nearly eight.'

'And you live here Dhani?'

Dhani nodded, 'My Bauji is Sarju Prasad and I am his son Ramdhan Prasad but everyone calls me Dhani.'







'And what does your father do Ramdhan Prasad and also Dhani?'

'Bauji is a senior gardener in that garden of the Bara Laat's house,' and he casually waved towards the back of the building looming in the distance. 'He grows the roses in the Mughal Garden.'

'Then come with me,' the man reached out a hand to the boy, 'let's go and sit in the garden on a comfortable bench and not this brick wall and I'll teach you multiplication tables.'

Dhani sprang up, very pleased that he did not have to do the homework and they began to stroll towards the garden. Then he thought of something and looked up anxiously, 'Won't they stop you? The garden belongs to the Laat Saheb you know and the guards stop people from going in. I can only go in with Bauji.'

'Don't worry. They won't stop me.'

'Oh really?' Dhani craned up his neck and gave the man a disbelieving look. 'The guards won't stop you?'

'No they won't.'

'Why not?'

'Because now I live there.'

Now Dhani knew that the man was talking nonsense, 'Live there? In that Laat Saheb's palace? And what's your name?'







'They call me Rajaji and it looks like I am the Laat Saheb now.'

Dhani gave a crooked grin, 'Nah! You're joking right? The Laat Saheb is always an angrez with white skin and blue eyes.' Then he waved at Rajaji's dhoti, 'And they never wear a dhoti.'

'This is 1948 and we are free Dhani.' Rajaji explained patiently. 'The angrez have all gone home including Lord Mountbatten who was the last governor general. And the government has asked me to become the next one.'

Dhani was still not convinced but he was a polite child and walked along peacefully with the man called Rajaji. Then he noticed something very strange. As they entered the garden, a man who was trimming a hedge put down his garden shears and bowed with a namaskar. They began to walk along one of the paths with flower beds on one side and the water channel running on the other and a gardener who was digging up the beds for calendula and marigolds dropped his spade, sprang up and bowed, murmuring, 'Namaskar Rajaji.'

'It looks like Rajaji is an important man,' Dhani concluded, 'but the Laat Saheb?' and he remembered the viceroys he had seen, men wearing fancy uniforms or top hats and suits, riding off in the horse carriage looking grim.

'Nah!' thought Dhani. 'Impossible! He's too friendly to be a Laat Saheb.'

They sat on a bench below a flowering mauksari tree and looking around Dhani gave a deep sigh of happiness. He loved this garden so much. It was his dream that one day he would work here like his grandfather







TAPAS GUHA





and father; dig the flower beds with his spade, letting the cool, brown earth crumble under his fingers, trim the hedges, clip the rose bushes...

'You don't need multiplication tables for that...' he mumbled moodily.

'For what?' Rajaji asked puzzled.

'To dig the earth and plant calendula and marigold like him and...'

'Very true. You like gardening?'

'Oh yes! The earth smells so nice when you dig it and when I walk barefoot on the grass it's like a carpet of silk under my feet...'

'You're quite a poet Ramdhan.'

'Then why does Bauji keep telling me I have to go to school and pass my exams? He didn't go to school, he just learnt gardening right here in the Mughal Garden from my Dadaji but every time I do badly in a test he gets so angry.'

Rajaji put an arm around Dhani's narrow shoulders and said, 'I think you should ask him why he wants you to study. I'm sure he has a very good reason.'

Dhani nodded, 'I will, tonight.'







'Then come and tell me what he said. Now my friend, let's start the multiplication tables for two...'

The gardeners working around them watched the old man and the boy as they sat companionably together and Dhani learnt the tables for two. He decided that Rajaji was much better than the Maths teacher in school because he taught the tables using really funny examples.

'Let's say we have two peacocks multiplied by three peacocks. How many birds do we get?' he asked.

'I see peacocks every morning. Yesterday one of them was dancing on the wall of the Purdah Bagh...'

'Don't change the subject Dhani. Two into three peacocks, how many of them then?'







'Six of course!' Dhani said immediately. Somehow with peacocks and mynah birds, potatoes and onions, multiplications became really easy.

As the sun brightened and it began to get a bit hot, a man in a peon's uniform came hurrying out of the building saying, 'Sir, you have the French ambassador coming at eleven o'clock.'

'Oh! I nearly forgot.' Rajaji stood up and then turned to Dhani, 'So Dhani you'll do your sums properly now?'

'Yes sir and I'll ask Bauji about school.'

Then Dhani stood and watched his newfound friend hurry away.







That evening Dhani was loitering around in the courtyard outside their small house. It was the quarters where all the gardeners of the viceregal estate lived. There was a row of rooms with a narrow veranda in front and a courtyard with trees before it. Dhani and his parents had two rooms and a kitchen.

Sarju Prasad walked into the courtyard after finishing his work in the rose garden and gave a puzzled look at his young son. 'What are you doing here? Why aren't you playing with your friends?' Usually he had to drag Dhani away from his game of marbles or hide and seek.

Dhani began to walk beside him, 'I met the Laat Saheb today Bauji.' He informed his father conversationally.

Sarju stopped and stared, 'You did what?'

'He's an old man who wears dhoti-kurta right? And these really thick glasses ... and he said that now that we are free we'll have Indian laat sahebs and he said his name was Rajaji...'

As he was speaking Dhani saw the expression on his father's face turn from doubt to surprise.

'One gardener said that Rajaji was sitting in the garden with a boy in the morning. I thought it must be someone from his family. That was you?'







Dhani gave a satisfied nod, 'That's a very nice man Bauji.'

Sarju swallowed a laugh. 'He'll be very grateful to hear that.'

'See, I was doing my sums under the peepal tree and he said I had done the sum all wrong...'

'What a surprise!' Sarju commented while washing up under a tap.

'Well yes ... then he said he'll teach me the multiplication tables. I didn't believe him when he said that he was the Laat Saheb. I said it was impossible because he did not have blue eyes and...'

Sarju froze, 'You said that? You were rude to Rajaji?'

'No ... no... He found it funny and laughed!'

'He is our governor general Dhani! Did you remember to namaskar him and touch his feet when you met him?'

'How could I?' Dhani shrugged. 'I didn't know he was the Laat Saheb.'

Hearing their voices Dhani's mother Jamuna came out and Dhani had to tell his story all over again.

'Do you know how lucky you are?' Jamuna asked him. 'Rajaji, our great leader spoke to you.'

'And he also taught me the multiplication tables for two. He's a pretty good teacher,' Dhani continued thoughtfully, 'much better than Verma sir in school.'

His parents began to laugh.

'Did you tell him that?' Jamuna wanted to know.







Dhani nodded, 'He found it funny too and said he was very happy that I like his teaching. Actually he said,' and Dhani mimicked Rajaji's precise voice, 'I am honoured that you approve...'

Later over a dinner of urad dal, baingan ka bharta and hot rotis Dhani remembered something. 'Bauji there is something I have to ask you.'

'Just one thing?' Sarju's eyebrows went up. 'Usually you have ten things.'

'No ... this is serious. I was telling Rajaji about how I like gardening, you know ... helping you dig the flower beds and plant the saplings and the smell of earth and grass ... and then I said that no one has to go to school to learn gardening, I can just learn from you like you did from Dadaji...'







‘Oh here we go again!’ Sarju groaned. ‘You can argue as much as you like Dhani but you’ll go to school and pass your matric exam and if you do well you will go to college and that is final.’

Jamuna leaned forward, ‘And what did Rajaji say when you told him that you hate going to school?’

‘He said I should ask Bauji why I have to go to school and then go and tell him what Bauji said.’

‘He wants to meet you again?’

‘Naturally! The multiplication table of three is left no? And after that there is four, then five ...’ Dhani stopped to chew and then continued with a shake of his tousled head, ‘then I have to teach him some things too.’

Sarju and Jamuna stopped eating and stared at him.

‘You’ll teach Rajaji?’

‘About flowers and trees, what else? He only knew about roses, marigolds and jasmines. Buss! Rajaji said I’m going to be his Mughal Garden teacher.’ Then Dhani turned to his father, ‘So Bauji why do I have to go to school when you did not?’

Finally Sarju Prasad told his son why he wanted Dhani to be educated.







Early next morning Dhani was lurking near the garden waiting for Rajaji to come for his morning walk. Then he spotted a white khadi-clad figure come briskly out swinging a walking stick and Dhani streaked across the lawns towards him, his face wreathed in a smile.

‘Raajaaji!!’

‘Ah there you are! Good morning Dhani.’

Then Dhani remembered what his mother had taught him and he folded his hands and bowed low saying, ‘Namaskar Rajagopalachariji!’ and then he dipped down and touched his feet.

Rajaji grinned, ‘Oh my! Now you know my full name.’ And a gentle hand stroked Dhani’s bent head in blessings.

‘Amma taught me. You have a very long name,’ Dhani gave a gusty sigh as he began to stroll happily beside his friend. ‘I kept forgetting it you know.’

‘Well actually my full name is Chakravarty Rajagopalachari and even Bapu used to say it was a real mouthful.’

‘Bapu? You mean Gandhiji?’

Rajaji nodded, ‘He was the one who began to call me Rajaji.’

Dhani nodded in agreement, ‘Bapu was wonderful.’

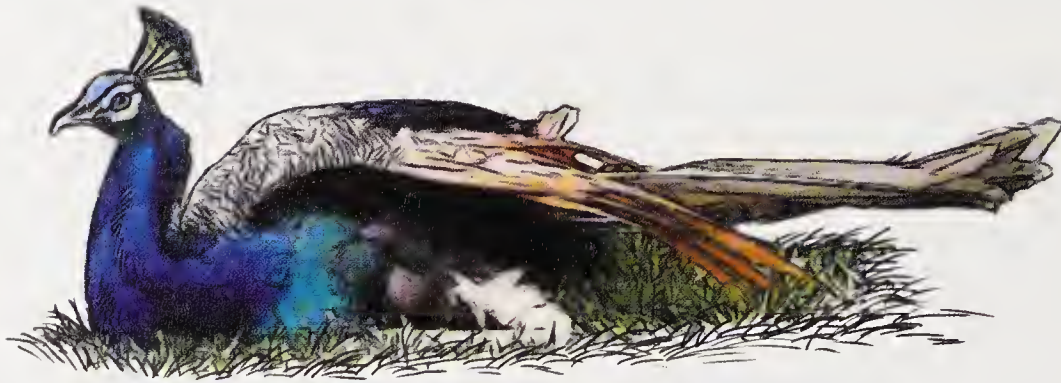
‘Yes he was.’

‘I miss Bapu.’

A fleeting touch of sadness flashed across Rajaji’s face, ‘So do I Dhani. So do I.’







They walked along in an easy silence, by the gently flowing water channels, the flower beds and hedges and then a bird called from the trees and Dhani smiled, 'That's my friendship bird.'

'Hmm?'

'That bird ... I don't know her name but she's my friend and so I call her the friendship bird. I like her song.'

'Kukoo kuk ... kukkkooo kuk...' the bird called again and Rajaji said, 'I think that's a ring dove ... I don't know what it's called in Hindi.'

'Ring dove, our friendship bird.'

They were near the circular butterfly garden when they heard a sharp screech and Dhani said, 'Peacock.'

'I know they are beautiful but they can't sing can they?'







'Nor can the mynah, always going chabbar ... chabbar ... just like Verma sir in school.'

Rajaji threw back his head and laughed. 'So did you ask your father why he wants you to go to school?'

'He said that Dadaji, my grandfather lost our land in the village because he was illiterate. He put his thumb print on a paper that he could not read and the moneylender took all his land. But if I am educated then no one can fool me.'

'He is absolutely right. And if you study you could become a better gardener. You could become a horticulturist.'

'A what?'

'A horticulturist is like a scientist of the garden. They know how to create new kinds of flowers, the best way to grow things...'

'We grow hundreds of varieties of roses...'

'Exactly! They were created by horticulturists and if you study the subject in college you could become the Head Gardener here. You are smart Dhani, you will do well if you decide to study.'

'A horti ... whatever is still a gardener?'

'Of course! He still works with the earth and plants the flower beds.'

Dhani gave a thoughtful nod, 'Right. Then I'll go to school and I won't fuss.'







‘And you’ll study hard and learn the multiplication tables?’

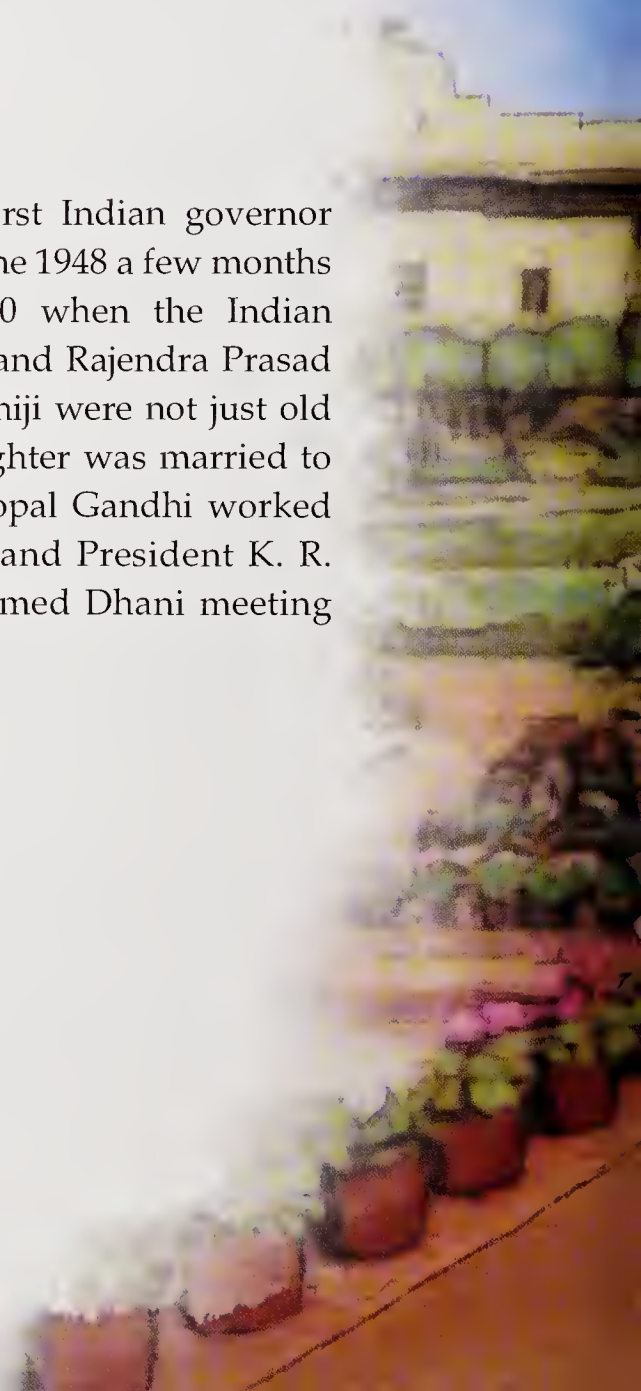
‘You’ll have to teach them to me first.’

‘That I will.’

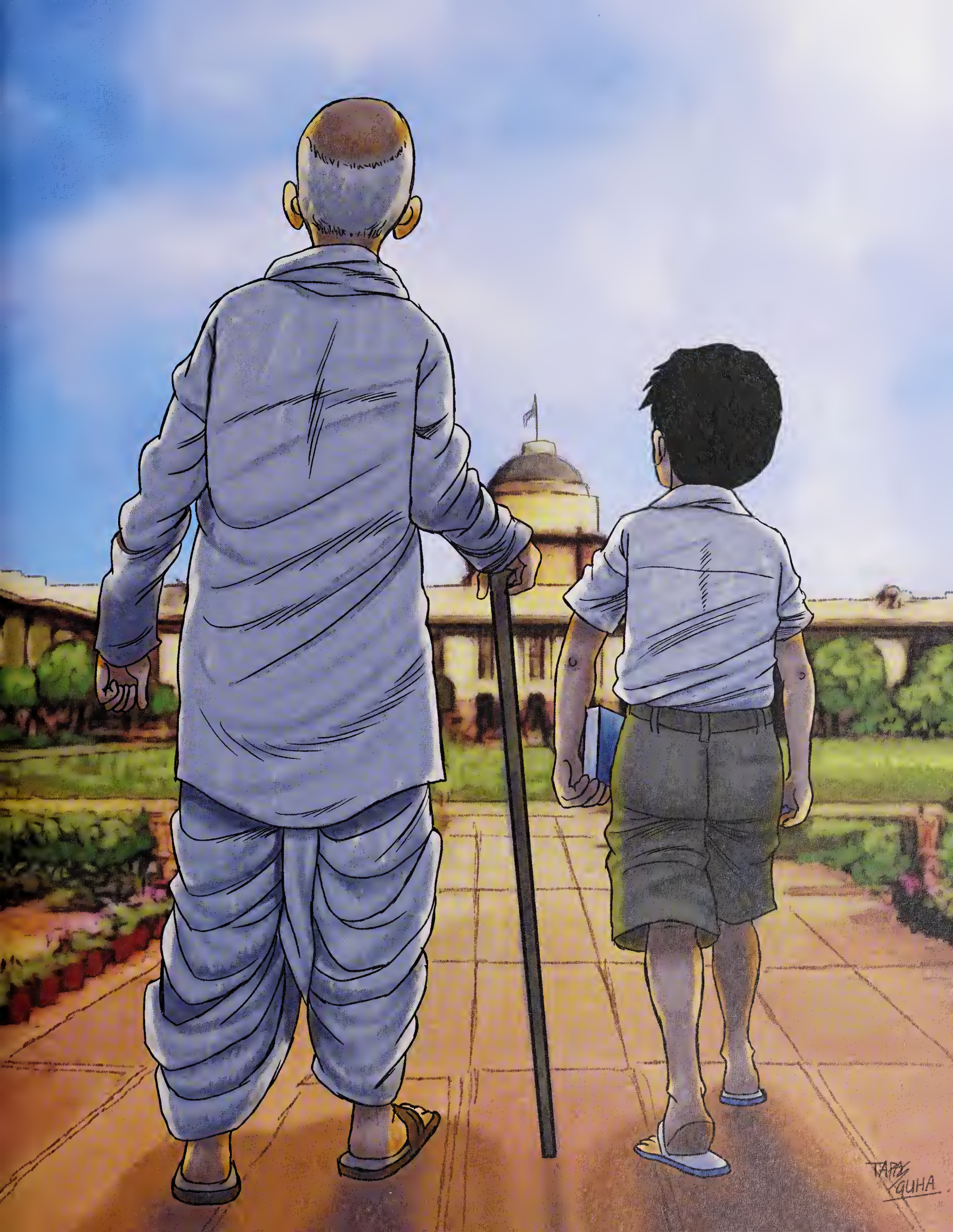
Then as Dhani and Rajaji walked past a fountain it spurted up a high stream of water and they saw the flash of a rainbow in its spray. Nearby among the cypress trees Dhani’s friendship bird softly sang her song to a new day.

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NOTE: Chakravarty Rajagopalachari was the first Indian governor general of independent India. He took office in June 1948 a few months after Mahatma Gandhi’s assassination. In 1950 when the Indian Constitution came into force, we got a president and Rajendra Prasad was the first President of India. Rajaji and Gandhiji were not just old friends they were also related as Gandhiji’s daughter was married to Rajaji’s son. Many years later their grandson Gopal Gandhi worked as the secretary to President R. Venkataraman and President K. R. Narayanan. However this story about a boy named Dhani meeting Rajaji is an imaginary one.









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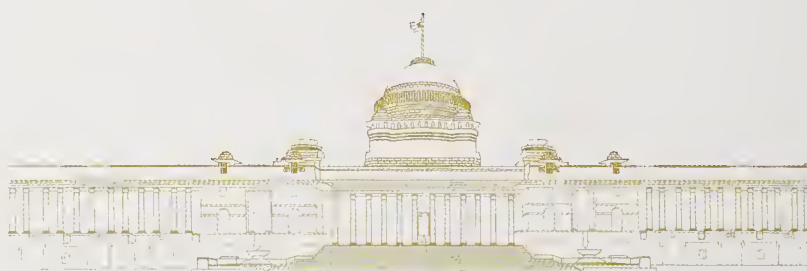








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